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MORE STORIES OF FAMOUS OPERAS

RETOLD BY

MRS. STANLEY WRENCH

ILLUSTRATED BY T. PEDDIE

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Preface

THE marked appreciation shown for the first volume of these stories of the famous operas, and the constant requests for a further selection, have called forth this volume.

Every opera of note contains a story that deals in an outstanding manner with some aspect of human affairs. And here, as in the previous volume, are a number of these stories, told in simple language. Notes regarding the composers have been included, and the book will therefore be of added interest and use both to those who are familiar with the operas, and those who have not yet seen them.

Tannhauser

This is one of the famous compositions of Richard Wagner (1813–83). *It was written while he was conductor of the Royal Opera at Dresden, being produced in* 1845, *in that city. The first production in London took place in* 1876. *Wagner's political views caused him to be exiled from Germany for many years. Eventually he settled in Baireuth under the patronage of King Ludwig of Bavaria. A magnificent Opera House was built there for the production of his works, and Wagner filled in his time when not composing by dressing as a workman and assisting in the erection of the building.*

The Princess sprang in front of her lover.

Tannhauser

IN the kingdom of Thuringia minstrelsy was accounted very high, and knights and warriors vied with one another for the wreath of laurel awarded at the contests of song frequently held.

One knight, Henry of Tannhauser, was renowned throughout the land for his marvellous voice. Upon his brow the beautiful Princess Elizabeth often placed the crown of victory at these music tournaments, and this gracious maiden, who was the niece of the Landgrave, or Prince, had fallen in love with the minstrel, just as he in turn was in love with her.

Yet he was not happy. It may have been that he feared to aspire to the hand of so high-born a maiden, or that he was afraid she would not be allowed to marry him if he spoke his love, but at all events he grew more discontented and unhappy, and was heard to declare that the joys of earth were no longer satisfying to him.

In Thuringia was a mysterious mountain known as the Hörselberg, or Hill of Venus, and it was here that the goddess of Love dwelt with her maidens, holding her court.

It was to this mountain that Tannhauser wandered in search of some new attraction, and from that moment he became lost to the rest of the world. None knew where he had gone, or why, but chief among those who missed and mourned him was the Princess Elizabeth.

For a whole year Henry of Tannhauser lived in the Court of Venus. Then, as though some thought from the other world pierced his consciousness he suddenly awoke, and realized how he was wasting life and opportunity, so he implored Venus to allow him to return to the world he had given up.

Furious at his request, she reproached him for base ingratitude.

Tannhauser answered that he would never forget to sing her praise, but he still desired to regain the world.

Angrily she gave him permission to go, declaring that he would soon tire of his freedom and wish to return to her.

So the Court of Venus vanished, and as Tannhauser opened his eyes he found himself in a beautiful valley, between the castle of the Landgrave and the Hörselberg. Falling on his knees, Tannhauser thanked God for his release, vowing to lead a life of repentance.

As he knelt and prayed a band of pilgrims came by, singing. They were on their way to Rome, and as they sang they confessed their faults and prayed for help and guidance. This hymn Tannhauser repeated as they went by.

* * * * *

A short time afterwards the Landgrave and his minstrels came that way on their return from hunting in the forest, and seeing the kneeling knight, drew near to see who he could be.

Discovering Tannhauser, they eagerly demanded to know where he had been, and begged him to return with them to the castle of the Landgrave.

Tannhauser told them that he had been a wanderer in far-off places, seeking peace. He added that he could not join them although their request allured him and he longed to do so, but announced his intention of becoming a pilgrim.

When he said this, his dearest friend, a knight called

Wolfram, told him that the Princess Elizabeth mourned his absence and had missed his music.

The name of Elizabeth seemed to act like a charm on the heart of the wanderer, for discovering, from hints Wolfram let fall, that the fair Princess loved him, the heart of Tannhauser began to throb, and flinging from him the thought of pilgrimage he declared that he would return to her.

At the castle revels and rejoicings were held, and a grand Tournament of Song was arranged, a wonderful prize being offered to the victor. The Princess Elizabeth, well knowing that none could match her Minstrel Knight, declared that she was willing to give herself in marriage to the one who should be acclaimed the victor.

* * * * *

The great day arrived, and in the famous Hall of Song the Landgrave and his Court assembled.

Then the Landgrave announced the theme of the contest. It was to be in Praise of Love and Nature.

Young Wolfram, Tannhauser's friend, was the first competitor. Unknown to the Princess, he loved her devotedly. He had no hopes of winning her, but was content to love and worship her from afar. He addressed his song to her, and the minstrels who followed did likewise.

When it came to Tannhauser's turn he astonished the company by a wild outburst, deriding their ideas of love as far too timid and ignoble.

And at last, entirely carried away by his feelings, he turned away from the fair Princess Elizabeth and addressed himself to the invisible Queen of Love.

Rushing upon him with drawn swords, the other minstrels would have killed Tannhauser had not the Princess sprung in front of her lover, unworthy though she now knew him to be.

Horrified at Tannhauser's behaviour, the Landgrave

pronounced sentence of banishment upon him; then because the beautiful Elizabeth interceded on his behalf, gave the sinful minstrel one more chance. A band of holy pilgrims was even then passing through the country on their way to Rome to visit a holy shrine and ask the blessing of the Pope. And the Landgrave bade Tannhauser join them, ask forgiveness, and urged him not to return unless he were forgiven.

Elizabeth added her entreaties to the Landgrave's, and Tannhauser, now humbly repentant and realizing how an illusion had blinded him, went off to join the pilgrims.

Weeks and months passed, until at last came the time when the band of pilgrims were expected to pass by on their return from the Holy City.

At dawn Elizabeth rose and went to the Shrine of the Virgin in the valley. Here, as she prayed, the faithful Wolfram kept watch, loving her yet knowing that his love was hopeless.

In the distance the sound of singing was heard, and soon the band of pilgrims came in sight. As they passed through the valley they sang joyfully, for they had been forgiven. Eagerly yet wistfully young Wolfram and Elizabeth scanned each face as the pilgrims passed, hoping, fearing, praying, but all in vain . . . Tannhauser was not among the band of pilgrims.

* * * * *

Terribly upset, Elizabeth determined to become a nun, and to devote herself to a life of prayer.

But it was not to be. Her heart was broken, and a few hours later she died in the arms of her weeping maidens.

Still dreaming of her and his love, Wolfram remained on the mountain-side, and at last he, too, broke forth in song.

The song, sweet and tender, reached the ears of a pilgrim drawing near, and in this travel-stained, toil-

worn man Wolfram recognised his lost friend, Tannhauser.

He drew back, reproaching Tannhauser for not obeying the orders of the Landgrave ; but then Tannhauser explained that he had indeed obeyed the command, that he had visited the sacred shrine, but had returned uncomforted.

Having reached the sacred shrine he had told his story and begged forgiveness. The Pope, however, had told him that the sin was too great for pardon.

" He who hath dwelt in the evil Court of Venus cannot hope to be forgiven," he said. " Such a sin is unpardonable. As well expect the rood I hold in my hand to put forth green leaves as to expect God our Father to forgive such iniquity."

Tannhauser had come back, loving Elizabeth, but despairing of ever winning her. He had not mingled with the happy pilgrims, but had followed in their wake. And now, despairing and wretched beyond belief, he called upon Venus, the goddess of Love, to receive him again, since love was denied him.

Bewitching music was heard, a dim mist encircled the Hörselberg and the lovely form of Venus appeared faintly. She called entreatingly to the knight.

Just then a solemn procession passed. Weeping maidens and mourning knights were following the bier of the Princess Elizabeth. Tannhauser stared at this in frozen horror. His dear love dead !

Just then another band of pilgrims appeared on the mountain-side, announcing a miracle in Rome. The rood of the Pope had put out fresh green leaves on the night of Tannhauser's departure, and taking this as a sign that God had forgiven, the Holy Father had sent messengers far and wide to announce that Tannhauser's sin was pardoned.

Venus vanished in the mists, Wolfram joined the holy pilgrims, and now, certain that his lost love

Elizabeth was an angel in Heaven, Tannhauser sank down beside her bier, faint and exhausted, yet joyful, for he glimpsed that for him the golden gates of Heaven were open, and that Elizabeth stood there waiting to welcome him.

The Mastersingers

Wagner wrote this opera whilst living in Munich, after being driven from Germany during the political upheaval of 1849. *It is interesting to note in passing that Wagner was an extremely poor pianist, and used the instrument very rarely when composing. He wrote his own librettos, however, and did a considerable amount of other literary work, mainly on musical subjects.*

She placed a wreath of victory upon Sir Walter's head.

The Mastersingers

IN the town of Nuremburg there lived a wealthy goldsmith named Veit Pogner. He possessed a beautiful daughter, Eva, who was in love with a young knight, Sir Walter von Stolzing. Sir Walter was a descendant of the old Minnesingers, whose poetic attainments and deeds of chivalry were handed down through the ages.

But the days of the Minnesingers were over. In their stead were various musical guilds, known as Mastersingers, and it was to join the ranks of the celebrated Mastersingers of Nuremberg that Sir Walter had left his decaying ancestral home.

He had had business dealings with the goldsmith concerning his estate, and in this way had met Eva, and fallen in love with her. She was fascinated by his romantic nature, and loved him with all her heart.

Now every year on a certain day, a musical competition was held in the town, and this year Veit Pogner offered as a prize the hand of his lovely daughter, together with all his riches and worldly estate.

If, however, the prizewinner should be distasteful to Eva, she was to have the power to refuse to marry him.

Only a Mastersinger could compete, so on the eve of the great day Sir Walter went to the church where the Mastersingers held their meetings. Here he applied for leave to enter the competition. But he was greatly taken aback when informed that the Guild was arranged the same as a Trades Guild, with varying degrees, and

that each member had to spend at least a year in each degree before he could become a "Master."

There was a host of rules and regulations as well, some of them so confusing that to Sir Walter it seemed quite hopeless to think he could succeed in getting admitted.

In the beautiful woods of his ancestral home he had learned to sing naturally. He knew no rules of singing, but he believed in himself and his capacity, so he requested permission to prove to the Mastersingers that he, too, was a master of song.

Since he had been vouched for by Veit Pogner, they allowed him to sing.

* * * * *

Sixtus Beckmesser, the town clerk, was the marker of the Mastersingers, and it was he who had to record on a slate the faults made against the established rules. He was conceited and old, yet he, being a Mastersinger, was going to compete for the prize.

However, when Sir Walter came forward to sing, he proceeded to set down the faults, and he eventually declared, when Sir Walter was about half-way through, that he had failed dozens of times over.

There was one Mastersinger who did not agree—Hans Sachs, the cobbler. Not only did he know that Beckmesser's outburst had been caused by jealousy, but being a true poet and musician himself, he was able to understand and appreciate the beauty of Walter's song.

Much to the astonishment of the other Mastersingers he boldly stood up in Walter's defence.

But they were too many for him, and at last Walter was declared outsung and unfit to enter their ranks.

The young man was filled with dismay at this. He saw that his chance of competing for Eva's hand was gone—so he made up his mind to try to elope with her that evening.

Eva, anxious to learn how her lover had fared, had sent her maid, Magdalena, to inquire, and she waited for her return at dusk outside her father's house.

She was in despair when Magdalena told her news, then seeing Sir Walter coming along, she sent the maid indoors and went forward to meet him.

Sir Walter then unfolded to her his plan of elopement, but before they could make any definite plans footsteps were heard, and they hurriedly hid themselves until the intruder had passed.

The new-comer was the conceited Beckmesser, who, having composed a song to sing at the competition next day, had come to serenade Eva with it.

It was a very poor song indeed, full of faults and extremely weak as regards the melody. In the middle of it Hans Sachs, whose shop was opposite, began to sing loudly a very rollicking song.

Beckmesser shouted to him to be silent. The cobbler, however, took no notice, so the town clerk entered the shop, and invited Hans to listen to his song. This was his idea of getting it to Eva's ears without interruption.

The cobbler agreed to listen, but added that for every fault he detected in the melody he would hammer a nail into the shoes which he was at that very moment mending for Beckmesser.

So the vain old man began his song again, and as he did so, he saw in the window opposite a maiden appear. He believed her to be Eva. Actually, though, it was Magdalena, waiting impatiently for her young mistress, who was, of course, down below.

There were so many faults in the song that long before it was over Hans Sachs had finished hammering the shoes, and he ran out waving them in triumph.

At the same time his apprentice, who was Magdalena's sweetheart, hearing the noise, looked out. Seeing

Magdalena opposite, and thinking the song was intended as a serenade to her, he rushed out angrily and began to set about the town clerk, who shouted loudly for aid.

Aroused by the noise, out poured the neighbours, while a number of mischievous apprentices also joined in the din.

Thinking that the noise gave him a chance, Sir Walter would have led Eva away, but Hans Sachs already suspected the plan, and he seized Sir Walter by the arm, at the same time pushing Eva into the house, where half-fainting she was met by her father, much amazed to find her out so late.

* * * * *

Next morning, while Hans Sachs sat in his workshop, arrayed in gala dress, along came Sir Walter, eager to tell him of a wonderful dream he had had, a dream he longed to set down as a song.

The old cobbler, kind at heart, bade him sing it, and gave him a few hints on how to produce a mastersong.

Encouraged by Hans and inspired by his dream, Sir Walter sang a song of such wonderful melody that the cobbler was almost overcome by joy. He bade Sir Walter don gala attire and come with him to the contest of singing.

Soon after the young knight had gone away to change his attire, Beckmesser hobbled stiffly into the shop. Seeing a manuscript—words which Hans had set to the music of Sir Walter's song—lying there, he imagined it to be a poem by Sachs, who was acknowledged as the most poetically minded among the Mastersingers.

He begged to be allowed to sing it instead of his own song, and Hans Sachs told him he might have the words if he would put them to music of his own making. He knew quite well that the conceited and illiterate

Beckmesser could never compose a melody suitable for Sir Walter's love-inspired lyric.

* * * * *

The great song competition was to be held in a large, open meadow on the outskirts of Nuremberg. Here, later in the day, all the townsfolk assembled, and Eva, with her attendant maidens, took her seat on a dais.

Hans Sachs then made the announcement, amid much applause, that he whose song should be acclaimed most worthy, should receive the prize. Then turning, he bade Beckmesser open the contest.

Armed with the poem, which all day he had been trying to commit to memory, the marker stepped forward.

But nervousness overcame him, and he forgot every word. All that issued from his lips was a discordant, hopeless medley of music.

At first the crowd thought he was having a joke with them. Then they roared with derisive laughter, completely drowning the singer, until in a fury Beckmesser flung his manuscript at Sachs, declaring angrily that Hans had tried to ruin his chances by foisting his own bad song upon him.

Hans then picked up the song and declared that not only was it a good one, but it was of such a nature that it could only be sung properly by the composer himself. And he thereupon called upon Sir Walter von Stolzing, adding that he was certain they would without doubt acclaim him the Mastersinger of Mastersingers.

The young knight stepped forward and began to sing, and the music touched the heart of every person in the crowd.

Applause broke from every throat as Sir Walter finished, and with one accord they named him the victor.

Flushing with joy, Eva bent forward and placed upon his brow the wreath of victory.

So the Contest of Song came to an end, and in winning his position as Master Mastersinger, Sir Walter also won a fair bride and a fortune.

The Barber of Seville

The parents of the Italian composer, Gioachino Antonio Rossini (1792–1868), *were strolling players, and during his earlier years he travelled from town to town with them, appearing at their performances.*

Rossini began to write operas at the age of eighteen, his first being produced in Venice in 1810. THE BARBER OF SEVILLE *was written when he was twenty-four. It was produced in Rome in* 1816 *and in London in* 1818.

In his own words, Rossini had a "passion for idleness." Certainly he would always leave his work to be done at the last minute; and because of his habit of procrastination the whole music for this immortal opera had to be written within a fortnight.

They were ready for the elopement—but the ladder had gone!

The Barber of Seville

ROMANTIC Seville lay in slumber, but suddenly from the shadows that lay about the old Moorish houses there came the sound of music. The soft tinkle of guitar and mandoline fell on the ears of a fair maiden, wakeful behind her shuttered windows, and she sat up and listened.

Then came the voice, the throbbing serenade, so well known in southern Spain. Yet this was different, and Rosina felt her heart beating fast. She had heard it before, but to-night something seemed to draw her to the window to discover who her serenader might be.

She knew—although she tried to trick herself into believing it might not be he; but even before she caught a glimpse of the cloaked cavalier whose rich voice wooed her, Rosina knew it was the same tall, handsome stranger who for some time past had been strolling round her house by day and serenading her by night.

To-night the love song seemed to have reached its zenith, and as Rosina stole from her bed and went to the window, she trembled, and knew that her heart returned the passion of the unknown singer.

* * * * *

They had never spoken to each other, but love has a language of its own. In the land of the mantilla eyes talk, and fans give signals; and Rosina and the handsome young man had each spoken by smiles and secret signs. She did not know who he was, but in reality the cloaked singer was a rich young nobleman of Spain,

by name Count Almaviva, who, on a visit to the city, had seen the lovely Rosina upon the balcony of her house, and had fallen in love with her. He had left his estate in the country, and had come to Seville to woo her in the romantic fashion of Old Spain.

But Rosina was a kind of prisoner. She was the ward of an old physician, Bartolo, who desired to marry her himself, and Bartolo thought that by keeping Rosina closely hidden and without friends he would win her in the end, since she would know nothing of love and marriage.

To-night, however, Count Almaviva hoped that barriers might be broken down, and that he would get speech with his adored one, and tell her of his love.

All his heart went out in his voice, but no beautiful maiden appeared to throw him a rose, and the dawn climbed higher in the sky, so that at last he was obliged to dismiss his musicians. Wrapping himself sadly in his cloak, the young Count stepped aside into the shadows.

* * * * *

Presently along the street there came a merry little man, Figaro by name. Figaro saw the dejected figure of the Count leaning against Rosina's house, and perhaps guessing that he had been vainly serenading some lovely maiden, the roguish little fellow accosted him in light-hearted fashion, at the same time offering his services should they be needed.

Figaro was a barber, but he was more than this. To listen to his light-hearted talk, one could only sum him up as being the general newsmonger of the town.

Without bragging or boasting, he explained to the Count that not only was he the best-known gossip in the city, not only was he the finest barber, but also he was the most accomplished match-maker and plotter in Seville.

At the word " match-maker " the Count glanced up

quickly, and the quick-witted Figaro guessed his secret. He was a merry, light-hearted, likeable fellow, and so, anxious for some one to whom he could pour out his heart, the Count spoke of his love for Rosina and begged the barber to assist him.

Figaro asked a few questions, expressed himself willing and ready to help the young Count, and very quickly he began to plot and plan how best to bring the two lovers together.

* * * * *

Figaro was no mere boaster. So well did he carry out his plans that in a short time Rosina learnt that the cloaked serenader who stood beneath her windows was a true lover, and desirous of winning her.

But the wily little barber did not tell his real name. Instead he told her that her lover was a young student by name Lindoro, and Rosina wrote a girlish note to him, telling him that his love was accepted by her.

This raised the Count to the seventh heaven of delight, and the next thing he desired was a meeting with his adored one. The barber set his wits to work.

He persuaded the Count to disguise himself as a common Spanish soldier, and to pretend to be drunk.

Thus attired, and acting in swaggering fashion, the Count made his way to the house of the old physician, and from him demanded a night's lodging, which, according to the custom of Seville, could not be denied to one who had served his country.

Bartolo was very indignant, and tried to argue the point, and the more noise the sham soldier made the more the old man tried to argue, so that at last, wondering what the noise was about, Rosina came down, her eyes big with wonder.

Lurching to her side, the Count managed to whisper to the girl who he was, and possibly Rosina may have suspected this, for she did not appear surprised, and the two lovers managed to exchange letters.

This was all that the sham soldier desired, so that when the guard arrived, summoned by the old doctor, and he was handed over to them, he went willingly enough.

As soon as he was safely out of earshot of Bartolo, the Count told the officers of the guard who he really was, and he was at once set free.

But the wily Figaro, making himself thoroughly acquainted with the state of the household, plotted and planned and devised a scheme for the Count to meet Rosina again.

* * * * *

This time the Count was disguised as a poor musician, the friend of a Don Basilio, who was a music master and well known to Dr. Bartolo. In this way he gained admittance to the house. He explained that Don Basilio was ill and that he had been sent in his stead.

At first Dr. Bartolo was suspicious, but the clever Count broke down these suspicions, and the two got on very well.

Finally the sham musician showed the old doctor the note which he had received from Rosina, telling him that he had found it in the inn where the Count lodged, and offering to show it to the young lady and to explain that it had been returned to her would-be lover by one of his other admirers. Her supposed lover had joked about the letter with his real mistress. He was only playing with her.

Bartolo thought this would be a very good plan, since it would convince Rosina that her serenader was only an adventurer, so he was quite gracious about the music lesson being given. He sent for Rosina and introduced the supposed Don Alonzo to her.

But the eyes of love were quick to penetrate the disguise, and Rosina knew it was her lover.

Just then the barber introduced himself in his pro-

fessional capacity to the old physician, so Bartolo was obliged to leave his ward alone with her supposed music master, and in order to carry out the pretence, the semblance of a singing lesson was gone through. But during the " lesson " the Count persuaded the girl to escape from the house that night by means of a ladder from her balcony. He had already made plans for a secret marriage.

* * * * *

In the midst of their plotting, however, the real singing master arrived, very much put about to discover that a young man had usurped his occupation.

But again the quick-witted barber saved the situation. He pretended great distress at the idea of Don Basilio being out of bed in so grave an illness, and feeling his pulse, declared that he was in a high fever, and begged him to return home to bed.

Absolutely bewildered, the music professor almost believed himself ill, but when the Count slipped a purse of money into his hand, his wits were quickened and he went off well pleased.

However, Bartolo was now more than suspicious, and it became necessary for the sham music master to make his escape. And no sooner had he gone than the old physician, who had got hold of the letter, showed it to Rosina and told her that the Count had other lovers and was only playing with her.

Full of joy at being with his dear one, the Count had forgotten to tell her of the ruse he himself had suggested in order to see her, and so Rosina was quickly made jealous.

A jealous woman soon reveals her secrets, and the old doctor learnt from his ward her plans for the intended elopement that night. He drove home his advantage, until Rosina did not know what to do in her distress. It was then that the cunning old doctor

pressed his own suit, and in a fit of pique the girl agreed to marry him.

* * * * *

Without giving her time to think or to change her mind, Bartolo hurried away to seek out a notary who would marry them at once, and on the way he met the music master, who informed him that the strange musician was Count Almaviva.

This only convinced the old physician that if he could hope to win Rosina he must marry her immediately. He made arrangements with Don Basilio to bring the notary with him, whilst he himself went in search of officers of justice to be present at the ceremony.

When Rosina was left alone she began to repent of her hasty promise. She thought of the music lesson, of the broken love words, and her heart throbbed faster. Yet even as she longed for Almaviva, jealousy tore at her heart.

Presently twilight changed to dusk, the dusk deepened into darkness, and Figaro, the barber, and Count Almaviva appeared outside with a ladder. Quickly they gained the balcony of Rosina's room, and here she joined them, although at first she retreated from her lover's arms.

It was only when he explained the whole matter of the letter to her that she relented, and then he explained who he was. Tenderly they embraced, and Figaro began to make preparations for their descent by the ladder.

But whilst they had been talking the ladder had disappeared!

That was the first surprise. A few minutes later Don Basilio came on the scene with the notary, the contract for the marriage all ready.

Not a moment had to be wasted then. Figaro, the quick-witted, had to act swiftly, but he kept faith with

the Count. He had promised to help him, and he did it now by assuring the notary that here were the parties to be married.

Don Basilio spluttered and tried to explain, but showing him a loaded pistol, the Count managed to convince him that it was much wiser to hold his tongue. So with good grace the old musician accepted the situation, and acted with Figaro as witness to the marriage contract.

* * * * *

So far as the law would have it Rosina and the Count were now united, but just at that moment Dr. Bartolo appeared with the officers of justice. Seeing the Count there, he denounced him as a rogue and vagabond, and turning to the officers of the law, demanded that he should be arrested.

But Count Almaviva was ready for this. Walking forward with great dignity, he announced his rank as a Grandee of Spain, and the officers of justice stepped back. Not even the law could touch the dignity of a Grandee.

The Count said that he and Rosina were married, and the notary was there to declare that he spoke the truth. Besides, Figaro, delighted at the turn of events, stepped forward with witty banter, and the old doctor gave in and declared that he would give the happy pair his blessing.

William Tell

This is another opera by Rossini. It was written when the composer was thirty-seven, and although he lived to be seventy-seven, it was his last opera. "One success more," he told his friends, "would add nothing to my fame, and one failure might impair it." So for the ensuing forty years he rested on his laurels. When WILLIAM TELL *was written, however, Rossini had already composed nearly forty other operas—no bad record.*

The tyrant fell at Tell's hands.

William Tell

ON the shores of the beautiful Lake Lucerne sat William Tell, his wife, Hedwig, and their little son, Jemmy, making merry together.

Suddenly they heard footsteps approaching, and a moment later were joined by two countrymen, Melchthal, an old man devoted to the cause of patriotism, and Arnold, his son. Melchthal was the patriarch of the village in which the Tell family lived, loved and respected by all, and he had sworn an oath, in which his son had joined, that he would expel the Austrian tyrants from Switzerland.

But Gessler, the Austrian despot, had a beautiful daughter named Mathilde, whose life young Arnold had saved. He had fallen deeply in love with her, and believed that his love was returned. Consequently, he was full of indecision. How could he rise up and lead his fellow villagers against a nation amongst whom was the girl he adored?

Partly guessing what was causing Arnold such distraction, and partly made a confidant to the young man's story, William Tell urged him to put duty to his country first, to let patriotism come before love.

Whilst they were talking, Leuthold, another villager, rushed up, panting and dishevelled, and in very fear of his life he begged them to help him.

They asked what had happened to put him in such a state of fear, and in a terrified voice he told them that he had killed an Austrian soldier who sought to abduct his daughter. Knowing well that a punishment

worse than death awaited him for such a crime, he begged them to convey him across the lake.

A Swiss fisherman was there with his boat, but upon being appealed to by Leuthold, he shook his head and pointed to the sky which was dark and threatening. He declared that in face of the storm which was coming he dared not venture.

Leuthold was almost frantic, but as he couldn't row, he was frightfully handicapped. However, in spite of the storm brewing, William Tell agreed to take him across. He leapt into the boat, told the terrified man to follow, and, despite the protests from the others who feared that both lives would be lost, rowed him to safety on the other side.

Scarcely had they gone before the Austrian soldiers came upon the scene, led by a lieutenant of the tyrannical Gessler.

Baulked of their victim, they seized the aged Melchthal and decided to hold him as a hostage. Then they set fire to Tell's cottage, and also to those of the neighbouring villagers, who were thus left homeless.

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In a forest where the horns of the huntsmen sounded merrily through the greenery, young Arnold met Mathilde, the Austrian maiden, and as he declared his love and devotion to her he was overjoyed to find that she loved him in return. For a time all differences of race were forgotten, the two young lovers forgetting that beyond the forest existed a state of war.

Whilst they talked, however, William Tell drew near, accompanied by a henchman. Both were furious to find Arnold making love to one of the enemy camp.

Previous to this, Tell had urged Arnold to be patriotic, but now he told him to revenge himself upon the Austrian soldiers, for they had murdered his father.

Arnold was heartbroken at hearing this news; and he bade Mathilde farewell. He could not now resist

the call to arms, so followed the others into the forest.

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From all sides Swiss shepherds, forest men and mountaineers were gathered together, and under the leadership of William Tell swore an oath of allegiance, as well as one of vengeance for the death of old Melchthal, whom they had all loved.

"Death to the tyrant! Down with the Austrian despot! To arms! To arms! Let us rise up and be free!" was their cry.

The rising, however, was speedily made known to Gessler, but although he pretended to be amused and indifferent, in reality he made up his mind to discover the ringleaders and put them to death.

So he resorted to a simple plan in order to discover who was craven and who was bold. In the market square of Altdorf he set up a pole upon which he placed his own regimental cap, demanding that every person who passed by should pay homage to it, as the sign of his authority. Anyone who passed without uncovering, he said, should be punished without mercy.

And, as every one knew, with such a man as Gessler, this meant death.

William Tell happened to pass by, and he, of course, refused to uncover. He was at once arrested and taken before Gessler—who had previously heard of Tell's skill as a bowman.

At first Gessler was cruel and arrogant, but he could not help admiring a brave man, and at last he offered to set Tell free if he would give an exhibition of his skill as an archer.

Tell agreed, and his little son, Jemmy, who happened to be near, was brought forward. An apple was placed on the boy's head, and William Tell was told to shoot it off.

The father made no demur. He looked long at Gessler, then drew out an arrow from his quiver and gazed at his son.

The boy did not flinch, for he had implicit faith in his father. . . . The arrow sped on its way—the apple was split in two! Next moment the boy had leapt forward and was clasped in his father's arms.

However, just as Gessler was about to give the command that Tell should be set free, he caught sight of another arrow in Tell's quiver. A sudden thought struck him.

"What would you have done with that second arrow had you not pierced the apple?" he asked.

Tell's eyes met his fearlessly.

"The second arrow was for you if I had slain my son!" he answered.

Gessler flinched, and even though he may have admired Tell's bravery and audacity, he determined that here was a man who would be safer in prison. So, by his commands, Tell was taken away.

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William Tell and his little son disappeared, and Hedwig, Tell's wife, mourned their loss.

She did not know of the scene with Gessler, but she knew that her husband was proud and impetuous, and that he would put his country even before her or their son.

Suddenly Mathilde appeared, bringing with her little Jemmy, whom she had rescued from her countrymen.

And soon afterwards they were joined by William Tell himself, who had managed to escape from the Austrians. But he knew that his enemy, Gessler, was searching for him.

So he hid himself. But the Austrian despot, in his mad search for him, fell right into Tell's hands—and received in his heart the solitary arrow left in Tell's quiver.

Then, at the head of a joyous band of Swiss patriots who had just routed the Austrians, Arnold came to the shores of the lake. He saw Mathilde there, and at once claimed her as his bride. . . . She consented to marry him.

And the Tell family united once again, every one joined in thanksgiving and prayer—thanksgiving that Switzerland was free, and prayer for guidance in the future government of the land.

The Daughter of the Regiment

Gaetano Donizetti (1798–1848) *was born in Italy, but he had Scottish blood in his veins. Because his father opposed his wish to adopt opera writing as a career, he ran away and enlisted in the army. He found military life irksome, however, and proceeded to write an opera in order to acquire funds to buy himself out of the ranks.* THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT, *one of his greatest works, was produced in Paris in* 1840 *and in London in* 1847.

Marie told her story.

The Daughter of the Regiment

THE Eleventh Regiment of the Grand Army of Napoleon, in occupation of part of Switzerland, had just received orders to proceed against the enemy, and the whole camp was full of the noise of departure.

Suddenly, in the midst of the excitement, the Marchioness of Berkenfeld, drove up on her way to her home, and she became very alarmed on seeing the armed soldiers.

As soon as Sulpizio, the sergeant in charge, became aware of her name and destination, however, he reassured her and invited her to rest in the camp until arrangements could be made to see her to safety.

Offering to put a tent at her disposal, Sulpizio assisted her to alight from her carriage, and as she retired, he turned away to greet a pretty young girl who was received with shouts of delight from the soldiers she happened to pass.

This was Marie, the Daughter of the Regiment. She had been discovered when a baby by Sulpizio, abandoned on a battlefield, and as no one had ever come forward to claim her, the Eleventh had adopted her.

When she was discovered on the battlefield, a letter had been found pinned to her clothing, evidently written by her father, and addressed to the Marchioness of Berkenfeld.

But the regiment was at that time on the move and the sergeant had no means of delivering it. So he had

hidden it away among his own possessions and said nothing about the matter. The unexpected arrival now of the lady herself brought the matter vividly to his mind.

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Marie was a merry, loyal-hearted maiden. All the soldiers loved her, and she loved them in return. If any were ill she was a nurse, and she cheered and comforted them in time of trouble.

Lately, however, the sergeant had noticed that she often looked sad, and now glancing towards her, he saw that her eyes were again wistful.

Calling her to him, he gently questioned her, and as he had always been a father to her, she made a confession. She had fallen in love.

The sergeant had half-expected this, but when he asked more questions, he was troubled to find that she was in love with a young Swiss, whom, by rights, she should have regarded as an enemy.

His name was Tonio, and he had rescued her from danger some time before. He had fallen passionately in love with her, and cared for her so ardently that regardless of the risk he ran of being arrested as a spy, he had continually followed the soldiers in order to be near her.

Whilst Marie was explaining this, a great commotion was heard, and next moment soldiers dragged forward a young man whom they had just arrested, believing him to be one of the enemy spying upon them. To Marie's alarm she recognized the prisoner as her lover.

Heedless of the surprise she created, she ran forward to kiss him. Then she told her story to the soldiers, who at once released Tonio. At this, the Swiss youth, declaring his love, asked permission to marry her.

The officers of the regiment hesitated, for Tonio was an enemy, but seeing how much the young couple

loved each other, they gave their consent on condition that Tonio joined their ranks, and served with them under Napoleon. So keen was his love, that he was willing to do this, and he was forthwith enrolled as a soldier of the Grand Army.

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Whilst Tonio was talking to Marie, the Marchioness of Berkenfeld came out of her tent. Sulpizio, remembering the letter, began to tell her Marie's story, finally handing to her the letter that had been pinned to the baby's clothing.

With signs of agitation on her aristocratic face, the lady read the letter. Then hurrying forward, she clasped Marie in her arms. To the sergeant she declared that Marie was the daughter of her own sister, who had secretly married a young Frenchman. She then announced her intention of taking her niece back with her to her home, where she could be properly educated.

The soldiers, hearing this, were full of dismay, and Marie wept and begged to be allowed to stay with them. Again and again she declared that she did not wish for riches and finery, but her aunt was firm in her determination to take her away. So Marie was persuaded to say good-bye to her life-long friends and to go with her newly-found aunt.

Kissing Tonio passionately, she told him she would always remain faithful to him, while Tonio, on his part, vowed that he would win for himself such a name and position that in time he could step forward and claim her hand in marriage.

Reaching the home of the Marchioness, a new life began for Marie. Not only was she dressed in rich clothes and treated as a lady of high rank, but her whole day was filled with tasks that seemed irksome—lessons in dancing, music, languages, and so on.

When a year had passed the Marchioness began to

arrange a marriage for her niece, choosing as a partner the son of a neighbouring Duchess.

Marie spoke to her aunt of her love for Tonio, and declared she would never love anyone else, but all her protests were in vain. Negotiations for the betrothal went on, the marriage contract was drawn up, and at length a day was fixed for it to be signed.

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Not many miles away a battle had been fought. Sergeant Sulpizio was wounded, and he was sent to the mansion with a request that shelter and nursing be given him.

The Marchioness was all kindness, remembering his goodness to Marie, and as he grew better she even allowed him to see her niece, proudly relating to him the plans she had made concerning her grand marriage.

At first the sergeant could hardly recognize in the well-dressed young lady the ragged little girl who had followed the soldiers, but when Marie hugged him as of old he knew that the Daughter of the Regiment had not really changed.

Time went on, and nearer and nearer drew the day on which the marriage contract was to be signed.

Marie grew more and more unhappy. She could not hide her despair, and on the morning of the signing of the contract, she went out very early in the morning, the sergeant accompanying her.

Whilst they stood, disconsolate, the merry notes of fife and drum fell on their ears, and the girl's face flushed with delight as she recognized the air.

It was the marching song of the Eleventh Regiment.

Soon the soldiers came upon them, and almost mad with delight Marie flung herself into the arms of Tonio, who was now the commanding officer, having been promoted for great gallantry on the battlefield.

She greeted all her old friends, and told them what had happened. Tonio thereupon announced his inten-

tion of asking her hand in marriage, claiming that his rank now entitled him to do this. He was upheld by the whole regiment, who, above everything, desired Marie's happiness.

The Marchioness haughtily refused, however, and declared that Marie must sign the marriage contract, for the lawyer had arrived.

But Tonio was not to be put off, and he said he would carry Marie away by force.

As the whole regiment was in sympathy with him, the Marchioness grew alarmed and had to adopt other tactics.

She now informed Marie that she was really her daughter, and claimed parental authority over her.

Marie was dumbfounded, but feeling that she could not disobey her own mother, she weepingly agreed to sign the contract.

Now the Marchioness had spoken the truth. Marie *was* her daughter, but remembering—as she saw how unhappy the girl was—her own love story, she relented. Calling Tonio to her side, she placed Marie's hand in his, and gave consent to their marriage.

So the other marriage contract was set aside, the lovers embraced joyfully, and the soldiers raised hearty cheers, for the happiness of the Daughter of the Regiment was now assured.

Aida

Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) *ranks as one of the most famous of the Italian composers. His first opera was produced in* 1839. AIDA, *produced in* 1871, *is considered by many critics to be the most pleasing of his many works. The opera was written specially for Ismail Pasha, Khedive of Egypt, and this fact accounts for its Eastern setting.*

The Princess was to be his wife—but Radames loved Aida.

Aida

THERE was war between two of the great nations of the world, Pharaoh, King of Egypt, leading his forces against Amonasro, King of Ethiopia. It was at the time when Egypt was at the height of her glory, so that wherever her armies went, she was victorious.

Amonasro was a brave man, and although defeated several times, he led his army yet again against the invader. But this time he was driven back—with dire results. The army was shattered, he had to flee for his life, and his own beautiful daughter, the Princess Aida, was taken captive by the invaders.

She was exquisitely beautiful, and although her captors did not know that she was the daughter of a King, they treated her with respect. When she reached Egypt she was taken before Pharaoh, who was so struck by her grace and beauty that he gave her to his own daughter Amneris as a slave.

Amneris was a proud princess, but she, too, was charmed by the sweet nature of Aida, so that instead of treating her as a slave, she adopted her as a sort of companion.

The young exile might have been happy except that, in secret, she mourned for her father, whom she dearly loved, and wept for her vanquished country.

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Then something happened to change the whole course of her life. A handsome young Egyptian officer, Radames by name, fell in love with her, and although at first she tried to choke down the feeling she had for

him, telling herself he was an enemy to her beloved country, love would not be denied, and when at last he spoke his passion, it was to find it returned by the beautiful girl.

But the haughty Princess Amneris was also in love with Radames, and he, being aware of this, tried to keep his love for the fair Aida a secret, and was cold to the Egyptian Princess. But she openly made advances and tried to show him how he could climb to favour at Court by means of her influence.

Radames was proud, and would have none of this, but for the sake of Aida he met her secretly.

It was not long, however, before the Egyptian Princess discovered that not only was her love unrequited, but that the man she desired had given his affection to another.

Furious, she no longer treated Aida as a friend.

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The King of Ethiopia had again gathered his army together and invaded Thebes, and, hearing this, Pharaoh assembled his soldiers, while according to custom the gods of Egypt were consulted as to who should lead the Egyptian armies to battle.

"The gods have chosen as leader Radames the brave," said Pharaoh, and all the assembly applauded, for Radames had won esteem from the highest to the lowest, and they rejoiced at the honour shown him. . . .

The armies of Egypt set out. They were wholly victorious, and when young Radames returned, a hero, not only had he defeated the enemy, but he had taken a large number of very important prisoners.

In the royal palace, where the hero was awaited, Princess Amneris sat surrounded by her maidens, joyously expectant, for now that Radames had proved himself so great a general she fully expected that the King would wish to give him a reward, and what greater

reward could a King of Egypt give than the hand of his fair daughter?

Radames came in, knelt before the King, and Princess Amneris placed a crown of victory on his head. But as Aida watched and wondered if he still loved her, she saw something that filled her heart with mixed feelings of joy and terror. For amongst the prisoners, dressed as an officer of the Ethiopian army, was her own father, the King.

Rushing forward, she flung herself into his arms, and he whispered then that he had allowed himself to be taken prisoner for very good reasons, one being to get news of her, the other to find out the plans and strength of the enemy, so he warned her not to disclose his real identity.

Then King Pharaoh stood up again and bade Radames claim any boon he choose to ask, and the heart of the Princess beat fast, for she was very beautiful and very desirable.

Instead, however, of asking her hand in marriage, Radames generously requested that his prisoners should be set free, and after some discussion this was agreed to, with the exception of Aida's father, who, being of stately bearing, was considered of noble rank, and as such worth keeping as hostage.

Then leading his daughter forward, the King placed her hand in that of Radames and declared that since Radames had asked nothing for himself he would give to him his own daughter as wife, the Princess of Egypt being the prize for the hero of his country.

Aida was plunged into grief, Amneris was triumphant, but Radames was bewildered and despairing. He could not refuse this favour from the King, yet loving Aida just as passionately as before he told himself he could never bring himself to wed any other maiden.

But for the present he decided he must be silent,

and whilst posing to the world as the betrothed of the Princess, try to find a way of freeing himself.

Days passed by, the wedding preparations were hastened on, and at last, in sheer desperation, on his wedding eve Radames asked Aida to meet him outside the Temple of Isis.

It chanced that her father heard this proposition, and as he had watched his daughter meanwhile and knew that her affection was given somewhere he determined to make use of his knowledge.

He had talked with the Egyptian soldiers, too, and had also learnt that his own people were united again to make one bold attempt against Egypt. So, desirous of gaining information about the plans of the enemy, he evaded his guards and made his way to the Temple of Isis, where he hid himself until Aida should arrive.

It was an old-world custom in Egypt that when one of her Princesses married she should spend a night in prayer and sacrifice to Isis, the night previous to her wedding vows being chosen as the time for these sacred rites.

So when darkness fell, Princess Amneris came to the Temple and was here met by the High Priest, who conducted her inside. Scarcely had she entered when Aida came near, and out of his hiding-place crept her father, who took her in his arms and begged her to help her dear country.

After she had sworn to do all in her power to assist, he told her that what he wished her to do was to discover from her lover how the Egyptians meant to make the next assault on their enemies.

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Aida was so taken aback that at first she refused, but having given her promise, she eventually agreed, and as Radames was heard approaching, Amonasro went back to his hiding-place. In another moment Aida was clasped in the arms of her lover.

But even with his arms about her, Aida remembered the mad jealousy of the Princess, and knew that a marriage between herself and Radames would be impossible.

So she begged him to leave Egypt, and fly with her to another land where they could pass their lives in happiness and peace together.

Radames seemed to hesitate, as well he might, for he was a soldier by profession, and already his victories had made him very happy and proud. But even so, he could not endure being separated from Aida, and assured her he was willing to fly with her that very night.

Kissing each other, their arms entwined, the two lovers were indeed about to make their secret departure when Aida suddenly remembered her promise to her father. She must find out where the Egyptian army lay hidden.

"But if we go how shall we escape the army of Egypt?" she cried.

"They are camping in the Pass of Napata, so if we avoid that we shall be safe," he told her.

Not only did Aida hear the secret; her father heard also, and he came out of his hiding-place, telling Radames he was King of Ethiopia, and urging him to join his own ranks, where much more glory and renown awaited him, with the hand of Aida as his reward.

And then before Radames could give Aida's father an answer, the Princess Amneris, together with the High Priest, came out of the Temple of Isis, having heard all that had passed. They called the guards, bidding them seize all three conspirators.

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But as leader of the army, Radames was able to engage the attention of the soldiers until King Amonasro and his daughter were at a safe distance, then he gave himself up, whilst the furious Princess looked on

disdainfully. Scorned by her lover, outdone by her serving-maid, she was almost beside herself, and yet her love for Radames outweighed all other feelings.

So later on, when Radames was being conveyed to the Royal Palace to be tried, she waylaid the guards and demanded to speak with the prisoner. She told him he would be sentenced to death, but she offered to save him if he would return her love.

But Radames would not listen. His mind was full of the image of Aida. He could think of nothing else; and he thrust the Princess away.

"Die then, traitor," she cried furiously, mad at the slight to her love, but as Radames passed away to the Hall of Judgment in the hands of his guards, she sank to the ground in a fit of bitter weeping.

Unable to enter, the Princess crouched at the door listening to the trial.

Radames was proud, however, and to all the accusations levelled against him he said no word. He had unwittingly betrayed his country, but he would not explain that the betrayal had been spoken innocently.

In solemn words the High Priest pronounced sentence on him. He was to be buried alive!

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The Princess grovelled at the doorway, full of dismay. But she could not save Radames now. Once the High Priest of Egypt had passed sentence of death, the doom of a traitor was sealed.

From the Hall of Judgment Radames was led to the Temple of Vulcan, and here the priests stood around and chanted the sacred Hymn of Death as the huge stone that covered the subterranean vault was lifted.

Here Radames was lowered, to be buried alive, and just as the stone was being replaced and the last rays of light were closing on him for ever he heard a faint sigh beside him, and, turning swiftly, saw his beloved Aida.

For a moment he thought it was a vision, and then, furious with the priests whom he thought had condemned the maiden to a living death like himself, Radames beat imploringly upon the stone slab, begging them to have pity. But not a sign came from above.

Groping her way to him, Aida told him that it was of her own free will she was here. She preferred to die with him, the man she loved, than live on alone without him.

So, clasped in each other's arms, the two lovers waited for death. Love was greater than all, since it had thrust out of their hearts the fear of what was before them.

Othello

The story in this tragic opera by Verdi closely follows Shakespeare's well-known play of the same name. From the point of view of technique, this is probably Verdi's greatest work. OTHELLO *was first produced at Milan in* 1887.

He intended to kill his own wife.

Othello

OTHELLO, a handsome Moor, had married Desdemona, a beautiful high-born Venetian lady.

Othello was a man of great intellect, and by reason of his ability he had risen to be commander of the Venetian Army, which was about to go on a military expedition to the island of Cyprus.

Iago, Othello's confidential officer, hated his superior, partly because of his steady rise to fame, but more bitterly because he had won Desdemona, with whom he himself was passionately in love.

So when the army was ordered to Cyprus and Iago found that he was to accompany Othello, he began to plot to cause Othello's downfall, or failing that, to bring about an estrangement between Othello and Desdemona.

Iago was made still more bitter by the fact that Cassio, another officer, was appointed lieutenant, the post he coveted.

However, when sailing for Cyprus, Othello placed his wife in Cassio's charge, so that she should be as comfortable on the journey as possible. In this Iago saw his chance. He would make Othello believe that the two were lovers.

In order to pave the way for discontent in Othello's mind, Iago persuaded the unsuspecting Cassio to take too much to drink on guard at the camp. In consequence, the young officer became mixed up in a quarrel with Montano, the retiring general of Cyprus, and when Othello came upon the scene—as arranged by Iago—

he was so furious that he deprived Cassio of his command.

Iago now pretended to be Cassio's friend, and suggested to him that if he were to sue for pity at the hands of the gentle Desdemona, she would intercede for him with Othello. Iago was already married, and his wife, Emilia, being lady-in-waiting to Desdemona, it was quite easy for such an interview to be arranged.

Desdemona, with no thought of harm, and loving her husband devotedly, readily agreed to see Cassio. Indeed, she received him most kindly and promised to help him. But just as Cassio was bending over her hand to kiss it on parting, Othello entered. He at once felt the pangs of jealousy, for Iago was beginning to sow seeds of suspicion in his mind. Moreover, Iago had arranged that Othello should enter at this very moment.

As soon as Desdemona began to plead for Cassio, doubt of her fidelity crept into Othello's heart, and Iago, with clever words and subtle phrases, helped the venom of jealousy to ferment and grow.

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Desdemona possessed a beautifully embroidered handkerchief which Othello had given her in the early days of their courtship—a handkerchief of such intricate workmanship that it could not be duplicated.

Iago now persuaded his wife to secure this. So when Desdemona dropped the pretty trifle one day, her lady-in-waiting picked it up and Iago took it from her.

The next time Iago was alone with Othello he bluntly told him that his wife was playing him false, and that he had often heard Cassio murmur her name in his sleep. He said, too, that he had seen the young officer with Desdemona's handkerchief, which she had given him as a love gift.

The Moor did not allow Iago to think that he believed

him, but the next time he greeted his wife he accused her in such terms and threatened such vengeance that the innocent girl was terrified as well as amazed.

Time went on and the estrangement between husband and wife widened, especially as Iago seized every opportunity to blacken Cassio's name.

Driven almost frantic with jealousy, Othello became so queer in his manner that Desdemona grew afraid and also very unhappy.

When she again pleaded for Cassio, her husband only saw in her words more confirmation of his suspicions, and when the handkerchief was found, as predicted by Iago, among Cassio's possessions, Othello was so furious that he would have killed his wife there and then had not State messengers arrived from Venice.

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The messengers brought Othello his recall to Venice, with instructions that Cassio should take his place, and again anxious to do young Cassio a good turn, Desdemona spoke to the envoys from her native land, urging that although Cassio had been disgraced she longed for his restoration to favour.

This infuriated Othello so much that he struck his wife a rough blow. Then he fell to the ground in a faint.

Sadly Desdemona went to her bedroom that night, her mind obsessed with strange forebodings. A spirit of restlessness was in the air. She started at every sound. Her nerves were all on edge, and she wept as Emilia, her lady-in-waiting, helped her to disrobe.

Then to Emilia she sang a song which had haunted her all day, a song her mother had sung upon her death-bed. Emilia tried to cheer her, but it was in vain.

A short while later, when the woman had gone, Desdemona prayed, got into bed, and finally fell asleep. . . .

The door of the chamber opened and a man entered with drawn sword, his features distorted, an insane look in his eyes. It was Othello, who intended to kill his wife as she lay there in her bed. But she appeared so fair and innocent that he felt he could not plunge his sword into her as he had planned.

He leant over the bed, love and jealousy fighting for mastery. Then he bent down and kissed her lips.

This awoke Desdemona, who, startled and terrified at the look in his eyes, begged to know what was amiss.

She was not reassured when he sternly asked her if she had said her prayers. When she tremblingly told him that she had, he declared that he was going to kill her for being false to him.

Pitifully she protested her innocence and begged for mercy. But jealousy had got the upper hand. Othello would not believe her, and he snatched up the pillows and suffocated her.

Perhaps because she suspected that something was amiss, perhaps remembering how unhappy her mistress had been, Emilia returned to the bedchamber and knocked at the door.

Turning, with distorted features, Othello relaxed his hold, and Emilia rushed into the room just in time to hear Desdemona murmur that she died innocent of what she was accused.

Horrified beyond measure at what she saw, Emilia shrieked for aid. Attendants hurried in, and the whole extent of Iago's treachery was then revealed by her.

Iago tried to stem her accusations, but finding this in vain, he rushed at her and stabbed her to the heart. He was arrested at once.

All too late Othello found that he had murdered the wife who adored him. Overcome with remorse, he seized his own sword and stabbed himself to the heart, falling down beside her body.

La Traviata

Another of Verdi's magnificent works. This opera was produced in 1852 *and, following the great success achieved by* RIGOLETTO *and* IL TROVATORE, *it helped to give Verdi his world-wide fame.*

He flung the purse at her feet.

La Traviata

IN the days of Louis le Grand of France, when absolute monarchy was at its zenith, Paris was more "the gay city" than ever—the brilliant centre of a brilliant circle. Salons were crowded with beautiful ladies and their attendant cavaliers.

One of these fascinating beauties was Violetta Valery, and all the gay young nobles flocked to her salon.

There came one evening, however, when Violetta seemed unwell. Every now and again—even though she was the merriest of the people assembled at her home—she would start violently, her cheeks become pale, her eyes take on a frightened expression.

At first no one appeared to notice this, but after a time Violetta became so faint that she found it impossible to move amongst her guests as before, and she was obliged to rest on a sofa, around which her friends gathered.

It was the spectre of ill-health that terrified her. Of rather frail physique to begin with, late hours and indulgence in pleasure had destroyed her health, and she was fearful lest serious illness overtake her.

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Amongst those who gathered around her sofa was Alfred de Germont, a handsome young nobleman who for months past had loved her. But he had never declared his passion, fearing that his suit would be hopeless, for she had always treated him with indifference.

But as a matter of fact Violetta *was* in love with him.

She had had affairs with many; but now, when real love came to her, she tried to conquer her passion, believing that it was better for the young man that she should remain his friend only.

To-night, however, Alfred de Germont meant to tell her of his love, and he at last found an opportunity. Tired of her repose, Violetta suddenly suggested dancing in the salon beyond, and all the guests joyously agreed, delighted to see their fair hostess apparently recovered.

But no sooner had Violetta gained her feet than a spasm of pain struck terror to her heart and she sank back again, pale and trembling.

Her friends clustered about her, but Violetta laughed away their fears. Although in great pain she declared it was nothing, and bade them go on with the dance.

By her light-heartedness she succeeded in allaying their fears, and they trooped off, after she had declared that she would rest for a few minutes and then join them.

Left to herself she rose slowly, and going to the nearest mirror looked into it long and anxiously.

It was just then that Alfred de Germont came into the room. Seeing her white face he begged her to take more care of her health, and then passionately declared his love for her.

At first Violetta tried to laugh at his protestations of devotion, but as he again begged her to accept him as her lover she could not hide from him the fact that his love was returned; and she gave way to his pleading.

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With the wonderful happiness that now thrilled her, Violetta determined to give up her Paris home and retire to the country, where she could enjoy the society of her lover.

She left Paris and spent three months of perfect happiness with him, oblivious to the call of society, and caring nothing what friends said or thought. Both of them were blissfully content.

Then one day, as Alfred returned from hunting, he met Annina—Violetta's maid—travel-stained and rather flustered. Her agitation increased when de Germont started to question her, and at last he discovered that she had just returned from Paris where she had been sent on business for her mistress.

Pursuing his questions Alfred learnt that Annina had been to Paris to sell all her mistress's possessions and property in order to supply the money necessary for the upkeep of the luxurious home in which they lived.

Alfred was horrified that Violetta should make such a sacrifice for him. He blamed himself, too, for not having thought of the money question. However, he told the maid that he would go at once to Paris to stop the sale, by paying over a large sum of money. The matter being urgent, he set off at once, after telling the girl not to say anything about his going to her mistress.

He had not departed long when Violetta entered the garden salon, a number of business papers in her hand. Settling herself down to go into the question of money matters and arrangements for the future, she began to read her letters and the various documents. Amongst them was a letter from a great friend of hers, Flora Bervoix by name, inviting her to attend, as a special favour, her masked ball that evening.

But so happy was Violetta in her retreat that she did not wish to go. She was just laughingly telling herself that Flora would look in vain for her that night when a stranger was ushered into the salon. Turning in surprise, Violetta saw an elderly aristocrat who informed her that he was the father of Alfred de Germont. In haughty tones he told her that she was bringing ruin upon his son.

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Indignant at such a charge, Violetta stood up, and the old nobleman became less angry as he came under the spell of her beauty.

However, in eloquent but subdued tones, he told her why he had come. Not only was she ruining Alfred's prospects by engaging his whole time and attention, but she was also being the indirect means of wrecking the happiness of his sister.

The de Germont family was one of the proudest in France. Mademoiselle de Germont was sought in marriage by a suitor of a lineage as proud as her own. Arrangements for the match were actually in hand when the love affair between Alfred and Violetta came to light. The sister's suitor threatened to break off the match unless Alfred freed himself.

Wistfully, Violetta listened, and at first she thought that her separation from her lover was to be but temporary, in order that the sister's marriage might be carried through. But finding that the old nobleman intended it to be final, she was overcome with grief, and she passionately declared her love for Alfred, assuring the aristocrat that Alfred was the only man she had ever really loved, and that she could not let him go.

De Germont was touched, but pride of race prevailed, and he went on to plead with the lovely girl, using every argument in his power to persuade her to give up his son. His position would be ruined, he told her. She was a stumbling block to any social success he could hope to attain.

She knew that he spoke truth although she hated to acknowledge it, and at last, knowing that her love for Alfred was greater than any feeling for herself, gave her promise that she would do as he wished, and renounce her love that very day.

Violetta bade him wait in the house whilst she wrote her farewells to his son. The old man went indoors.

It was a difficult message to write, and Violetta was very sad, but just as she had finished writing the letter,

Alfred himself returned, tenderly begging her to tell him what was amiss.

She tried to smile and make light of her trouble, and begged him to tell her that he loved her.

Embracing her passionately, he assured her of his undying devotion. And then, without a word of farewell or any intimation that she was about to leave him, Violetta stepped from the garden salon into the garden itself, and here gave her farewell note to a servant, bidding him deliver it to de Germont.

A resolution in her heart, but terribly sad, she set off for Paris.

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Despair ate into Alfred's heart, as he read her farewell note, and his grief was terrible to behold as he realized that she had renounced their love and left him for ever.

Then he saw lying on the table the note from Flora inviting Violetta to attend the ball, and in the swiftness of a second his distress changed to jealousy. He remembered that the Baron Duphol—whom he had always regarded as a rival—would be at the ball, for the Baron was a great friend of Flora's. Without waiting to reason things out he concluded that Violetta had tired of his lovemaking and had gone to dance with his hated rival.

When his father entered the room and endeavoured to calm him Alfred shook him off impatiently. The older man begged Alfred to return home with him and to forget Violetta, but Alfred announced his intention of attending the ball himself. Nothing his father said could dissuade him. He rushed off, and the old nobleman, much disturbed at his son's agitation, followed quickly after him.

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Flora's house that night was packed with merrymakers, among them being Baron Duphol, together

with many more of Violetta's former admirers and lovers. Alfred de Germont was also there, and he mixed with the other masked guests.

Soon the beautiful Violetta arrived, and when the Baron Duphol saw that she had no escort, he moved eagerly to her side, and offered his arm.

From room to room they went until the gaming salon was reached, and it was here that Violetta suddenly recognized Alfred. She drew back quickly, remembering her solemn promise to his father, but it was too late.

Alfred had seen her, and his jealousy was fanned to a violent flame when he saw that she was with the Baron. He now felt certain that Violetta had played him false, and that she had really deserted him for the Baron Duphol. But although he trembled with rage he hid his chagrin and jealousy, and challenged the Baron to play with him. In rather haughty fashion Duphol accepted, and the two commenced to gamble for very high stakes.

Again and again de Germont won, and Violetta watched with fear in her eyes.

When supper was announced she managed to draw Alfred aside for a moment, and in a trembling voice begged him to leave and so avoid danger. Her lover mistook her anxiety for fear for his rival.

Bitterness and fury surged in his heart. Suddenly he turned, and in a loud voice called the guests to witness what he was about to do. First of all he repudiated Violetta's friendship and spoke scornfully of their love. Then he flung his purse containing his gains at her feet announcing that he had now paid her for all she had ever done for him. He turned to go whilst Violetta fell fainting into the arms of her friends.

The Baron Duphol was furious at the affront put upon a lady whom he loved and respected, and he at once sprang after Alfred and challenged him to a duel.

De Germont accepted the challenge, and the elder de Germont, who had followed his son to Paris and who had at last discovered his whereabouts, came in at that moment, just in time to drag Alfred away.

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Violetta's sacrifice had apparently been in vain, and grief and despair quickly did their work. Ill-health again seized her. Every day she became weaker and weaker.

One day a letter was handed to her, a missive which brought the colour back to her cheeks and the light to her eyes. The letter was from the elder de Germont. The proud aristocrat who, for the sake of his name and his race had begged her to give up his son, now wrote begging her to accept him. He told her that Alfred was even then on his way to see her, as he had at last found out the noble way in which she had behaved.

The old nobleman also said that he had once done all in his power to part them, but now he wanted to bring them together again with a view to marriage.

Scarcely had she finished reading this missive when her lover was announced.

Eagerly he clasped Violetta in his arms and begged her to forgive him.

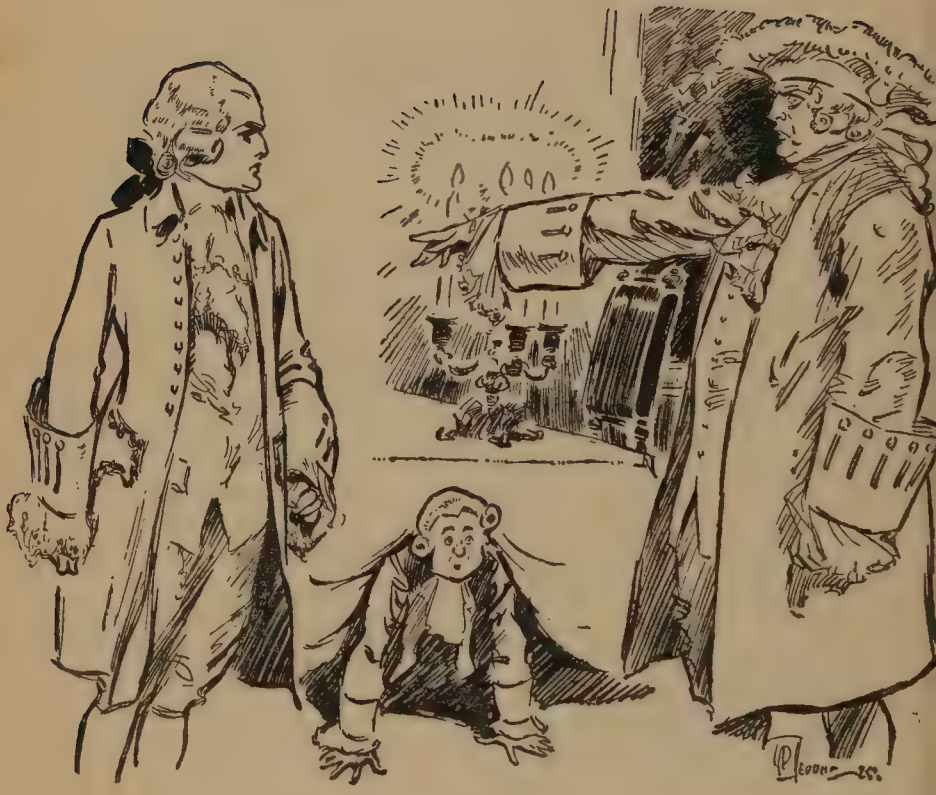
She looked at him with tear-filled eyes, but the strain of it all was too much for her.

Love had come too late. As Alfred de Germont bent over his dear one waiting for her answer, a long, bitter cry broke from him. It was not sleep that had closed her eyes. Beautiful Violetta was dead.

Don Giovanni

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91) *was a wonderful musician even in his earliest years. He was a clever pianist when he was but four years old, a composer at the age of six, and by the time he was eight he had played in most of the capitals of Europe.*

DON GIOVANNI *was first produced in Prague in* 1787. *The opera was written entirely in the open air, on odd scraps of paper. The evening before the first performance was to be given, it was discovered that the overture had not been written. Mozart set to work at midnight, and his wife kept him awake, as he worked through the night, by telling him fairy tales. By seven o'clock the overture was finished!*



Leporello hid beneath the table while Don Giovanni faced his strange guest.

Don Giovanni

IN a courtyard outside the stately palace of the Commandant of Seville there lounged upon a stone seat in the moonlight a man named Leporello, servant to Don Giovanni, a dissolute nobleman, who had abandoned his wife, Elvira.

Leporello's master was at that moment in the palace, which he had entered by stealth to carry off the Commandant's beautiful young daughter, Donna Anna.

As Leporello lounged there in the shadows, the silence was suddenly broken by shrieks, and Don Giovanni rushed out into the moonlight, closely followed by a lady.

Now Leporello was accustomed to his master's bad behaviour, but never had he encountered a shrieking lady following him before, and being rather chicken-hearted, he kept out of sight.

What had happened was that the girl suddenly discovered Don Giovanni in her room, and cried loudly for help. He, afraid of being discovered, rushed off. Then, as she regained her courage, she pursued him, hoping in the moonlight to snatch the long dark cloak from him, uncover his features, and so discover his identity.

Don Giovanni shook her off roughly and turned to escape, but before he could climb over the wall, Don Pedro, the Commandant, rushed out, a drawn sword in his hand. He had heard the frantic cries of his daughter, and he now confronted Don Giovanni, demanding satisfaction.

The rascal would willingly have made his escape had

it been possible, but there was no help for it, so while Leporello skulked among the shadows and Donna Anna rushed back into the palace to get aid, the two men fought.

Don Giovanni was an accomplished swordsman, and he soon killed Don Pedro. When the chicken-hearted Leporello saw that his master was the victor, he came out of his hiding-place and the two escaped over the wall, just before Donna Anna and several servants came upon the scene.

With her was her lover, Don Octavio, and as they came upon the dead body, the poor girl cried out in despair and flung herself, half fainting, upon her father's prostrate form.

Tenderly, and with many loving words, Don Octavio tried to comfort her, assuring her that he would be her protector. But Donna Anna would not rest content until he had sworn that he would help her to bring the murderer to justice.

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Regardless of the crime he had committed, on the next night Don Giovanni was planning another conquest. For this purpose he was in the garden of an inn on the borders of his own estate just outside the walls of Seville.

Suddenly he saw a lady, heavily veiled and wearing a long cloak, come out of the inn into the garden, so he went behind some bushes so that he could watch her and be unobserved himself. She seemed in great distress—wringing her hands, and lamenting the unfaithfulness of her lover. Struck by her noble air, Don Giovanni stepped forward with a gallant bow, hoping that here was a conquest ready to hand.

The lady flung back her veil, and he saw with dismay that she was Donna Elvira, his own neglected wife. She recognized him, of course, and began to reproach him, declaring that he had ruined her life.

Angry at having deceived himself, Don Giovanni hurried off, bidding his servant remain behind and explain matters to the lady.

Now Donna Elvira loved her husband, and it was genuine grief that had sent her out to try to discover his whereabouts.

But Leporello was accustomed to such happenings, and he callously took out a notebook in which were the names and particulars of all his master's victims. In cold-blooded fashion he assured her that she was not the first—nor would she be the last—to be deceived. After this Leporello went away, leaving Donna Elvira standing there stunned with grief.

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Slowly she recovered and slowly she grew conscious of what was her fate. But she resolved there and then to follow her betrayer and denounce him. So she made after Leporello, guessing that he would rejoin his master.

Meanwhile Don Giovanni went to his palace, where he found great revels and rejoicings being held in honour of the betrothal of Zerlina, a very beautiful peasant girl, and Masetto, another peasant. For Don Giovanni to see a pretty girl was for him to want her, so he gave Leporello instructions to take all the merry-makers into the palace, feast them, and give them drink, but above all, to keep Masetto out of the way.

When this was done he tempted the unsuspecting Zerlina into the woodland glades. The peasant girl was much impressed by the noble lord, and when he took her into a summer house in the forest, swearing that she should be his bride, she forgot all about Masetto. But just then Donna Elvira appeared and revealed Don Giovanni in his true character. Then she led the weeping and repentant bride-to-be away from the place.

Donna Elvira took Zerlina with her to be her maid,

but Don Giovanni discovered their whereabouts, and went to the courtyard of the house, still determined to win the girl. A plan had formed in his mind, so to carry it out he changed clothes with Leporello, who accompanied him.

Then when Donna Elvira opened the window, the servant made love to her and begged her to come down.

Donna Elvira believed that she might regain her husband's love, and she went down, mistaking Leporello for Don Giovanni. The servant then hurried out into the street, whilst his master serenaded the maid.

Masetto, however, and a number of peasants, fell upon him—Masetto having suspected evil ever since the ball. But finding that he was only Leporello—as they thought—the peasants all went off.

Masetto, though, was enticed away by Don Giovanni, who suddenly dealt him a violent blow and then left him stunned and helpless on the ground.

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Meanwhile the real Leporello was set upon by Don Octavio, who mistook him for Don Giovanni. When he eventually met his master, he ruefully related the tale of his woes, but Don Giovanni only laughed.

Suddenly a strange muffled sound seemed to come from the statue beside which they stood, and turning to investigate, they discovered that the statue was one raised in memory of the murdered Commandant, Don Pedro. Leporello was terrified, but Don Giovanni made him invite the Statue to the palace for supper that night. Quaking with fear, Leporello swore that the Statue bowed its head in answer. This made Don Giovanni laugh more than ever.

Evening came, and the banqueting hall in Don Giovanni's palace was filled with beautiful ladies and large numbers of noblemen. Music and revelry filled the air, and Don Giovanni grew very hilarious.

Suddenly Donna Elvira appeared, her face pale, and

warned him that danger was approaching. She made a last effort to turn him from his evil life, but he only jeered at her. At last she turned away, loving him still in spite of his falseness, but obliged to leave him to his fate.

As she reached the door, she uttered a shriek. Those standing about the doorway grew pale and frightened, too, for coming up the stairs was the Statue—marble come to life!

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Some of the ladies uttered cries, others fainted or fled from the banqueting hall. Leporello hid beneath the table, and as the Statue entered all the lights went low, finally going out altogether. And then Don Giovanni was face to face with his strange guest.

At first he, also, was afraid, but putting a bold front on the matter, he made some laughing speech to which the Statue replied. Then in solemn tones the apparition invited Don Giovanni to share the feast.

Don Giovanni did not heed Leporello's horrified protests, but as the Statue seized his hand a cold shiver ran over him. Too late Don Giovanni realized that his last hour had come.

The Statue then dropped his hand and disappeared. Flames sprang up, together with a host of demons. Don Giovanni tried in vain to free himself from their grasp, but he could not. He was dragged by them into a bottomless abyss.

When Don Octavio appeared a short while later with the officers of Justice it was to find that justice had already been meted out. Don Giovanni was no more!

The Marriage of Figaro

Mozart wrote this opera in 1786 *and it was produced in Vienna in that year. In common with most of Mozart's other operas it is extremely popular in this country. It is interesting to note that Mozart lived in London for a year when he was a child. He and his parents were received by the King and Queen and the young musician delighted them with his playing of the King's organ.*

He did not heed Susanna's signal for him to stop.

The Marriage of Figaro

FIGARO was servant to Count Almaviva of Spain, a great lord who was continually having love affairs and intrigues, but who was extremely touchy where affairs in his own household were concerned.

The King of Spain had recently appointed the Count as ambassador to London, Figaro attending him as courier, but before setting out Figaro's marriage was to take place, he being betrothed to a pretty waiting-maid, Susanna by name.

But Figaro was in a quandary, for from his betrothed he had just learnt that his master had been making love to her.

A short time before this Figaro had excited the interest and love of a lady, Marcellina by name, who was on a visit to the Count's castle. She was well over middle age, but was of a very sentimental disposition.

She had flirted with Figaro, and finding that he owed a considerable sum of money, had lent it to him, but in return had extorted a signed promise that if he could not repay her he would marry her.

Happy-go-lucky Figaro, thankful to pay his debts, and never dreaming that the lady would claim the fulfilment of the promise, was amazed when Marcellina declared she would enforce her rights.

To assist her, she had sent to Seville for Dr. Bartolo —whose housekeeper she had been for many years, and with whom she had had a love affair—but he did not arrive until this, the very day of Figaro's marriage.

Marcellina showed Dr. Bartolo the signed contract,

and as the old doctor already owed Figaro a grudge, he agreed to help her, and the two started to make plans.

The assistance of the Count must be obtained, they decided, so having discovered his liking for the pretty Susanna, they arranged that she should make him feel piqued and angry, so that he would be the more willing to help them.

With this idea in mind the elderly lady sought out Susanna in her own room, taunting her, but Susanna gave her measure for measure.

Directly Marcellina had departed, Cherubino—page to the Countess—rushed into Susanna's room, declaring breathlessly that the Count had just dismissed him because he had been found flirting with the gardener's daughter. The page said he knew the Count had a liking for Susanna, and he had come to beg her to intercede for him. But as they talked footsteps were heard, so the page hid behind a large armchair.

It was the Count himself who entered, and he began to make love to Susanna, begging her meet him in the garden at twilight. Susanna tried to repulse him and answer him coldly, but the amorous Count would have embraced her had not he, in turn, heard voices outside. Fearful of being caught in a compromising situation, he looked round for a hiding-place.

He espied the same armchair behind which Cherubino was hiding, but the page was just in time to leap into the seat as the Count hid himself behind it. And Susanna, flustered and worried, flung a dress over the youthful page, thus concealing him from sight as Basilio, an old music master, entered.

Basilio was a mischief-making old fellow; and a story ran in the castle that Cherubino, the handsome page, and the Countess were lovers, so he had come primed with rumour to find out from Susanna if the story were true.

He declared that the page was infatuated with his mistress, that there would be a scandal—and, of course, he did not understand Susanna's signals for him to stop, knowing the Count hidden behind the chair was jealous for the honour of his house.

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Furious, the Count sprang out, discovering Cherubino; so imagining that the page had been making love to Susanna, he declared in his indignation that he would denounce her to Figaro.

But Susanna was a wise little soul, and reminding the Count that the page had overheard his own love-making to her, secured his pardon on the understanding that the page should take up military service at once and proceed to Seville.

Meanwhile the Countess had sent for Figaro, knowing him to be an adept at plots, knowing, too, that he was aware of his master's intrigues. Really loving her husband, the Countess desired to win him back and to make him feel ashamed of his unfaithfulness.

Figaro's plan was that Susanna should promise to meet the Count at twilight in the garden, that Cherubino should dress in her clothes and meet him instead, and that the Countess should discover her husband making love to the supposed Susanna. Also that a letter should be given to the Count, informing him that the Countess was meeting a lover at the revels that night. The Countess agreed to this, thinking that after a bout of jealousy her husband would be willing to return to her.

Cherubino readily agreed also, and he was taken to the boudoir of the Countess to be dressed in Susanna's clothes. The headdress and gown were already in place, the Countess was looking on, and Susanna had run into the adjoining room to fetch a ribbon—when the Count himself knocked at the door of the boudoir. Finding it locked he grew suspicious.

Angrily he demanded that it be opened, so Cherubino sprang into a wardrobe, and the frightened Countess locked it, putting the key in her pocket. Then she opened the door to admit the suspicious husband. He had received the accusing letter, and he declared that the Countess had a lover.

Alas! at that moment Cherubino in the wardrobe made a noise. The furious husband turned and demanded who was in there. The frightened Countess said it was Susanna who had been trying on a dress and had slipped in to hide, as she had very little on. The Count called her name, but as no one answered he went off to get tools to break open the wardrobe, making the Countess accompany him, and locking the door of the boudoir as they went out.

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When they had gone Susanna rushed from the inner room and, with her duplicate key, opened the door of the wardrobe, letting out the frightened Cherubino, who escaped by the window.

Susanna just had time to slip into the wardrobe and lock herself in before the angry Count stalked forward to smash down the door. At this point, however, the Countess gave up her own key; but great was her amazement when Susanna stood revealed.

Ashamed of his suspicions, the Count begged his wife to forgive him, showing her the letter, which he said had been the cause of his jealousy. She then confessed that the letter had been written by Figaro in order to make him jealous, and when Figaro himself came in and admitted this the matter seemed to be cleared up.

All might have gone well had not an old gardener come in with a number of broken flower pots, saying that he had just seen a man leap from the window of the room.

This aroused the Count's jealousy again, and although Figaro tried to explain by saying it was he who had

leapt out, frightened by hearing his master's angry voice, the explanation did not ring true.

At this stage Dr. Bartolo and Marcellina came in with their charges against Figaro, and when they produced the signed document, the Count promised that his lawyer should attend at once to the matter referred to.

The Count's lawyer arrived, and gave as his decision that the contract was legally binding unless Figaro could produce the money.

But Figaro declared that he could not be married against his will without the consent of his parents, whom he declared were of noble birth.

Taxed as to who his parents were, Figaro said that he had been stolen from his home by gipsies when he was a child, but that on his arm was a curious mark which would furnish some clue to his real identity.

A strange thing then happened, for Marcellina, who had wanted to marry him, now came forward declaring that Figaro must be her own dear son whom she had lost in infancy, and whose arm had been marked in such a manner at a very early age.

Dr. Bartolo was his father, and he too came forward and announced that he would marry his former housekeeper and acknowledge Figaro as his heir.

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The page, Cherubino, had not yet departed, having a wish to stay whilst the marriage festivities were held, so having sought out the pretty gardener's daughter he persuaded her to lend him some clothes. Dressed up as a girl he joined a procession of peasant maidens who came to offer flowers to the Countess.

The gardener's daughter said that Cherubino was her cousin, and the Countess leant forward in admiration and kissed him on the forehead—at the moment that the Count appeared with the old gardener.

Now the gardener had discovered Cherubino's prank,

and when the Countess discovered that she had kissed her page in mistake for a pretty girl she was so vexed that she told the Count it was indeed Cherubino who had jumped from her window that morning.

Angrily the Count turned to Figaro and demanded to know why he had confessed that it was he who had leapt from the boudoir window. The nimble-witted servant saved the situation with a joke, however, and ran off to join his wedding guests, but it left the Count with the feeling that he was still being fooled.

The Countess felt that all her plans had miscarried, so she went off in search of Susanna and again enlisted her aid.

They decided that Susanna should write to the Count, agreeing to meet him at twilight in the garden as he had suggested. This note was given by Susanna to the gardener's daughter with strict orders to deliver it only into the hands of the Count.

Suspecting some mischief the girl read the note, and after she had given it to the Count, she chanced to meet Figaro, so told him that Susanna intended to play him false.

Poor Figaro! He knew nothing of the plot, and jealousy sprang up in his heart.

But there was something that Figaro, the Count, and the gardener's daughter did not know. Susanna and the Countess had arranged to change clothes, so that when the Count kept his appointment he would really be meeting his own wife.

When the time came Susanna accompanied her mistress to the appointed spot, but whilst the Countess walked out into the open, the maid waited beneath the trees, and Figaro, hiding in the bushes, saw them.

Soon the Count appeared and turned eagerly to the lady.

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The Countess was, of course, wearing Susanna's

clothes, so in the twilight the Count was quite deceived, and he led her off towards a summer pavilion.

Just then Susanna caught sight of Figaro. She confronted him. But Figaro, believing that Susanna had gone willingly with the Count, began to explain to the "Countess" what had happened.

It was only when Susanna flung herself into his arms and explained everything that he was content, and he promised willingly to help her in a plan she had made with the Countess.

Hearing voices, the Count came out of the summer house—to see Figaro on his knees before the "Countess."

The Count rushed forward, believing the lady to be his wife, and mad with anger and jealousy he shouted for his servants to arrest the daring lover. . . .

But as soon as he discovered what had actually occurred his anger went, and, recognizing that the Countess had won the day with her ruse, begged her to forgive him all his amours of the past. And since she was able to reassure herself that he still cared for her, she forgave him and was happy.

Doubts and difficulties had been swept away, so the marriage of Figaro could now take place.

The Magic Flute

This opera, also by Mozart, was the last work of this brilliant composer before he died, at the early age of thirty-five. He was bedridden with a malignant fever when the opera was produced. Propped up with pillows, with a watch by his side, he followed in fancy the production of his great work. "Now the curtain rises," he whispered faintly. "The opera begins. I can see Tamino . . . ." Mozart died shortly after.

The three maidens turned their attention to the Prince, who was just recovering from his swoon.

The Magic Flute

WHEN dragons roamed in woods and one could summon genii, both good and bad, by magic, anything might happen. The story of the Magic Flute harks back to these days.

Prince Tamino was out hunting one day. But either his horse outstripped all the others, or some enchanter mixed spells to mislead him and the rest of his party. At all events the young man suddenly discovered that he was alone in the wilderness.

He sought vainly to regain his party, but the farther he went the more confused he grew, and just as he realized that he was indeed lost in the Egyptian desert, a series of strange happenings began to take place.

The desert changed to a kind of jungle in which wild beasts wandered, and a monster appeared at sight of which the young Prince was seized with terror.

He was brave at heart, but this creature was so horrible to look at, so huge, that fear struck at the young man's heart, and he turned to flee, having no weapon with which to defend himself.

The creature pursued him, and rapidly gained on him. Tamino shouted for help as his strength began to give way, and with the fearsome beast's breath hot upon him he fell down fainting.

But his cry had been heard. The Queen of the Night was an enchantress who lived in that wilderness, and she dispatched three of her maidens, who also understood magic and enchantment.

Just as the dragon was about to devour its prey they

slew the monster by a spell of wonderful power, and as the creature rolled over in its death pangs each turned her attention to the handsome youth who was just recovering from his swoon.

He was young, good-looking, and of so frank a countenance, that enchantresses though they were, each maiden wished to remain with the prince, and an argument took place as to which of the three should constitute herself his guardian.

Not being able to agree, they left him before he was really aware of their presence, deciding to carry the news to their mistress, the Queen of the Night, and await her decision.

Immediately the three maidens had disappeared, a strange, feather-clad being came along. This was Papageno, the Bird-Man.

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Now when the young Prince recovered and saw the huge creature lying dead, and this feather-clad creature dancing around, he naturally concluded that Papageno was his deliverer, and poured out his gratitude to the stranger.

Papageno was rather a vain fellow, although very good-hearted, and liked the idea of posing as a hero, so instead of confessing that he had had nothing to do with the slaughter of the monster, he proceeded to tell a very elaborate story of how he had slain the ugly beast at grave danger to his own life.

Just then the three maidens returned. They heard what Papageno was saying, and were highly indignant, so using their magic again, they fastened up his mouth with a golden padlock.

Then turning to the Prince, who stood, much amazed, they showed him a picture of their young mistress, the daughter of the Queen of the Night. This was Pamina, a lovely young girl, of such exceeding beauty that Tamino fell in love with her picture there and then.

Whilst he held the portrait in his hands, the Queen of the Night arrived, and informed him that he was trespassing in her territory, and as such was her prisoner.

Looking at her, the bewildered Prince did not know what to do ; but the Queen of the Night pointed to the picture and told him that this was a portrait of her daughter who had been stolen from her by a magician, Sarastro by name, and that he was keeping her a prisoner in the Temple of Magic.

Looking him full in the eyes, the enchantress informed the Prince that although he was her prisoner she would willingly release him and pardon him for trespassing in her territory if he would undertake to go forth and deliver her daughter from the power of this hated rival. She added that she would reward him with the hand of her lovely daughter if he would obtain her deliverance.

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Already in love with the pictured beauty, the Prince leapt at the chance to win her in this way, and he announced his intention of setting out at once.

Then turning to the Bird-Man, whom he had believed to be a gallant and brave helper, he suggested that Papageno should accompany him, naturally believing that his aid would be invaluable in such a cause.

So the three maidens removed the golden padlock from the mouth of the Bird-Man, gave him back his powers of speech, and Papageno declared his willingness to accompanying the Prince.

The maidens then gave presents to the two bold adventurers. To the Prince they gave a magic flute, which, if played upon in times of danger, would always bring help, and to the Bird-Man they handed a chime of bells, also holding magic. If danger threatened, they told him, he had only to ring these, and aid would be immediately forthcoming.

The Queen of the Night also called up three young boy genii or spirits, whom she commanded to serve the Prince and his companion as guides, and thus equipped, the two set out upon their adventure.

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Guided by the genii, it was not long before the pair arrived in sight of the Castle of Sarastro, the Master Magician, and gaily dancing on ahead, carrying his chime of bells, the merry Bird-Man arrived first at the courtyard of the Castle.

Here was the lovely Pamina herself, but she was in great distress. Sarastro, the high-priest of Isis, had given the maiden into the charge of a Moorish servant named Monostatos, and the black man, attracted by the exquisite beauty of his young mistress, had fallen in love with her. He had attempted to make love, but Pamina, hating and fearing him, had repulsed his offers with much scorn. This had so enraged him that the Moor had actually taken her in his arms and was about to force her to kiss him, when the Bird-Man appeared on the scene. At sight of him, attired so fantastically, the black man let the maiden go, and leapt to a safe distance.

Papageno now saw by the face of the maiden that this was indeed the lady with whom the Prince had fallen in love, and he at once told her the story of the romantic young lover, and begged her to come with him, and he would lead her to love and happiness.

Trembling still over her encounter with the Moor, Pamina seized at the idea of getting away from him, so without stopping to think of anything else, she gladly accepted the offer of the man in the bird's dress, and taking his hand, the two fled from the courtyard.

For a moment or two Monostatos was too bewildered to do anything but stare after them, then realizing that he would be held responsible for the loss of the

lady, he hurriedly summoned the guards, and they gave chase at once, and quickly overtook the two.

It seemed as though Fate were against them, but remembering his magic bells the Bird-Man shook them defiantly in the face of his pursuers, with the result that they forgot the object of their pursuit and began to dance merrily. Such was the magic in the bells that pursuers and pursued joined together in merry dancing, singing as they went, and the whole party returned to the Castle.

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Whilst this had happened Prince Tamino had arrived at the courtyard, guided thither by the three genii, and knocking loudly at the doors, he was met by one of the priests. The young Prince bravely demanded to be led to the tyrant Sarastro.

Much annoyed at hearing his master described as a tyrant, the priest made an indignant answer, and told Tamino that Sarastro was wise and good. He was actually the high-priest of Isis, and instead of being a malevolent thief, who had stolen Pamina from the care of her mother, he had really brought the maiden away from the wicked enchantress in order that she should not be contaminated by her evil arts.

Just then the party of merrymakers returned to the Castle. At sight of Pamina the Prince hurried to her side. And it was a case of love at first sight with her, too.

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All the chatter of noise and merrymaking had penetrated the walls of the Castle, and had reached the ears of the high-priest himself, so summoning his under-priests, he now came on the scene.

The story was related to him of how the Bird-Man had arrived just in time to frustrate the plans of the Moor. Indignant at learning of his misplaced trust in Monostatos, the high-priest ordered him to be imme-

diately punished. Then with fatherly kindness he addressed the two young lovers.

He was willing that they should marry, but not at once, for he declared love must stand many tests.

Looking him boldly in the face, Tamino declared that his love was deep and true enough to stand any test, and that he was willing to submit to anything in order to prove this.

Taking him at his word, Sarastro gave command for the young Prince to be conveyed to the Temple of Isis to undergo the various tests and trials which should prove his manhood and powers of endurance, as well as his love for the beautiful girl who, also, was to go through a term of probation, and continue her course of training.

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In the meantime the enchantress discovered what had happened. Furious at being baulked by Sarastro, she employed again every magic art in her power.

She was able to render herself invisible, and so obtain an interview with Tamino, her object being to tempt him to return with her and enter her service. She appeared before the Prince, but bribes failed, her beauty was as nothing to him, so the temptress was baffled once more.

There came times now when Pamina lost hope, for the period of probation was very long; so at last she sought out the high-priest and begged him to let her share the same trials that the Prince was enduring. After a little deliberation, he agreed.

So the two were together. Hand in hand, they had to wade through water, not knowing its depth. They traversed a lake of fire, and yet won through. Their mutual love helped them to overcome each terrible obstacle.

But whenever things were at their blackest the young Prince would play upon the magic flute, and this not

only brought hope and joy back to the heart of Pamina, but seemed to drive perils and dangers far away.

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Their last trial came in the Temple of Isis and they were just on the point of winning through when the Queen of the Night appeared, making one more effort to frustrate their designs.

When they might have given way to her temptings, for both were almost spent, Sarastro came to their aid with his magic, and raised a dreadful tempest, so that the Queen of the Night was driven out of the Temple by a huge flood of water. But the two lovers emerged triumphant.

Sarastro considered that this ordeal was enough, and the young Prince was allowed to take his bride, having won her.

The plans of the Queen of the Night were defeated, and Tamino and Pamina joined hand in hand and set out to their marriage, confident that their trials and troubles would help them to appreciate each other. The magic flute had cheered and comforted them, and they would take it with them in life's journey.

La Sonnambula

This opera was the work of Vincenzo Bellini (1801–35). *It was first produced at Milan in* 1831, *and came to London two years later, where it was hailed with delight. The part of Amina, by the way, was chosen by both Madame Patti and Madame Albani for their first appearance before an English public. Bellini had the assistance of all the greatest operatic singers of his time, in fact, owing to the excellence of his vocal melodies.*

Amina was walking in her sleep.

La Sonnambula

ON the village green a number of light-hearted Italian peasants were gathered, setting up garlands of flowers in readiness for the wedding which was to take place on the morrow.

Elvino, a prosperous young farmer, betrothed to an orphan girl, Amina, was to marry her next day, and he had invited all his friends to a merry-making.

Amina had never known her parents, and she had been brought up by Dame Teresa of the Mill. She was a beautiful girl, sweet and good, and every one in the village loved her—every one, save Lisa, the good-looking hostess of the inn, who had fallen in love with the handsome Elvino, and hoped to marry him herself. He had paid her attentions once upon a time, and this had led her to hope that she could win his affections.

But watching pretty Amina flitting about among the guests who had arrived, Lisa grew jealous, and began to make very spiteful remarks about her.

Now, Alessio, a peasant, full of fun and merriment, was in love with Lisa, and although she walked about with him, she snubbed him at every turn. If he praised her she scowled and made cutting remarks, but in spite of her bad temper Alessio was not at all upset, and he persisted in his love-making. Indeed, walking on the green with her, and seeing that the notary had arrived for the wedding on the morrow, he suggested that they should put their names down for marriage, and so save him the trouble of coming again.

Lisa, however, tossed her head angrily and turned

impatiently away from her too eager swain, who thereupon began to sing a merry marriage song he had composed in honour of the great day.

Amina, accompanied by her foster-mother, appeared just then, and all the villagers joined in the song.

The girl thanked her friends as they finished, and turning to the frowning Lisa, who now stood with Alessio, suggested that they, too, should become betrothed and copy her example.

But Lisa refused and remained sulky and aloof. Then as Elvino appeared, and greeted his fiancée affectionately, her jealousy broke out afresh.

With the arrival of the notary, the business of the formal betrothal began. The guests gathered about a table outside Dame Teresa's house, and the notary, having unrolled the paper, showed the pair where to sign. When they had written their names the betrothal was complete.

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At this moment a stranger approached the inn and inquired if the castle of the landlord was near by. Upon being told that the chateau was some distance off he announced his intention of staying the night at the inn.

He was dressed in rich attire, and his bearing and speech showed him to be a man of some importance and high rank, so Lisa hurried forward and offered the best rooms to him. When he accepted she went away to prepare them.

The stranger soon noticed the beauty of Amina to whom he spoke. In fact, he could scarcely take his eyes off her, and her betrothed, noting this, spoke reproachfully to her, telling her that she should not have spoken to a stranger.

Lovingly she soothed his jealous outburst and they were happy once more.

It was then that Alessio came along with the news

that the stranger was their own Lord, Count Rodolpho, who had been born there, but who had not visited the chateau since he was a child. This delighted the simple villagers, and they arranged to sing a song of welcome to the Count at day-break.

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Some time later Count Rodolpho was shown to his room by Lisa.

Lisa was, of course, a pretty girl, and the Count, who had an eye for a pretty face, invited her to enter.

Rather flattered at being singled out for his attention, as she thought, Lisa did so.

When he went so far as to snatch a kiss, she did not mind, and his speeches greatly pleased her.

But it was growing late, and fearing that her reputation might suffer, she turned to go. As she did so she saw a figure advancing towards them, clad in a long white robe, and speaking in a low voice.

To Lisa's amazement the white-robed figure was Amina, and a minute later she realized that although her eyes were wide open, she was really walking in her sleep. Apparently she was talking to her lover, reproaching him for having doubted her.

At first, Lisa was rather frightened, but there suddenly entered her mind a plan for hurting Amina and possibly stopping the wedding. She hurried from the room, intending to seek Elvino and tell him that his sweetheart was not true to him, having been found in the rooms of the rich Count.

As she went Amina took the Count's hand in hers, still in her sleep, and gently caressed it.

The Count felt strangely chivalrous and kind towards the lovely girl. He could not explain why, for he had never before missed an opportunity of making love to a beautiful girl. But leaving the room without awakening her, he went out intending to go to the chateau.

When he had gone Amina sank down upon his bed and continued peacefully to sleep.

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At daybreak the peasants came to the inn singing their joyous song of welcome, but Amina slept on.

Just then the malicious Lisa returned with Elvino, to whom she had told the story of his betrothed being in the Count's rooms. But she had said nothing about her sleep-walking.

Amazed and bewildered, finding her story apparently true, Elvino angrily reproached the girl as she awakened, declaring that she was wicked and faithless.

Amina could not explain. Indeed she was too bewildered herself. But she earnestly begged him to trust and believe in her. Elvino, however, refused and went off in a rage.

Lisa followed him to the woods, where she artfully helped on the feeling of anger against Amina, at the same time cunningly directing his attention to herself.

But seeing that he paid little or no attention, she left him, to wander down another woodland path.

Meanwhile, the peasants, having heard the story, had set off for the chateau, intending to see the Count and find out what he knew of the matter.

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Wretched and bewildered, poor Amina had also sought the woods, followed by her faithful foster-mother, Dame Teresa.

A little while later the band of peasants came in sight, and with them Count Rodolpho. Having heard what had happened to the lovely maiden who had so interested him, he was determined to establish her innocence.

It was he, in fact, who saw Amina first. She was almost exhausted by the trouble that had befallen her, so gently raising her to her feet he bade Dame Teresa make her rest whilst he sought out Elvino. The mill

was near by, and the old woman coaxed the weeping girl there.

The Count soon found Elvino and he related all that had happened, explaining that Amina was a sleep-walker, and that she had walked into his room while asleep.

Elvino's heart leapt with relief, yet doubt still remained, for although he had heard of sleep-walking, he did not understand what it was.

Whilst they stood there Amina herself approached with wide-open, unseeing eyes. At once the Count realized that she was again sleep-walking, so he bade the peasants on no account awaken her.

A narrow bridge above the mill-wheel was the place chosen by Amina to stand, and there she spoke Elvino's name, begging him to believe her.

Almost frantic with fear for her safety, the lover had to wait until she had again stepped back to safety. . . .

And when a little later on she woke naturally, it was to find him bending over her, joy and sorrow blending in his eyes.

So before sunset the couple were married, to the great joy of the villagers who sang happily, now that the innocence of the belle of the village was established.

Samson and Delilah

Charles Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921), *the great French composer and pianist, was forty years old when he began work on* SAMSON AND DELILAH. *The opera was first produced in Weimar in* 1877. *It was many years, however, before the composer gained the recognition he deserved. But at last it came and his fame spread all over the world. Saint-Saëns was once an organist in a church in Paris.*

She began to dance gracefully.

Samson and Delilah

IN a big public square in Gaza, in the province of Judah, a large number of the people of Israel were gathered together.

They had been conquered by the Philistines, their ancient enemies, and hurt and bitter, they looked towards Samson, their leader—a mighty warrior—to help and advise them.

He urged them to prayer and patience, and with one accord they prayed to be delivered from the yoke of the Philistines.

Whilst they were on their knees Abimelech, a Philistine officer, came out of the temple near by, and taunted the worshippers, also sneering at their God.

More scorn and bitter taunts followed, until Samson could endure it no longer.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet. He was a man of gigantic strength, and was idolized by his followers, for in their eyes he could do no wrong. Leaping towards Abimelech, he snatched the sword from the man's side, and with one mighty blow felled him to the ground.

The crowd were horror-stricken, for they realized that a crime such as had just been committed would be followed by the severest punishment possible. For a moment they seemed to shrink back, over-awed.

Hearing the outcry of the Philistine officer, a number of his soldiers came hurrying up to his aid, but they were too late. He was dying.

Furious, they hurled themselves upon Samson, intent

on taking him prisoner, for it was easy to see that he was the man guilty of the deed.

He was so strong, however, that he repulsed every one of them, hurling them back as fast as they tried to seize him. At last, amazed and terrified, they stood back.

Then out of the temple, drawn by the noise of fighting, came the High Priest of Dagon. He at once realized what had happened, and tried to urge other Philistines forward.

But they refused. "We cannot stand against this Samson," they cried. "He is invincible." And no amount of urging would make them pit their strength and numbers against him.

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The Israelites gathered about their leader, and he told them to arm themselves and avenge their wrongs.

Taking heart at his victory over the Philistine soldiers, they hurried off, eager for battle.

Soon they had collected their forces, and a battle took place. During its progress a messenger hastened to the square, shouting that everywhere the Israelites were victorious. Then the sound of the returning warriors was heard.

As the warriors reached the square, Samson at their head, there came out of the Temple of Dagon Delilah, a fascinating and very beautiful Philistine woman, accompanied by her maidens.

She began to sing the praises of Samson, the mighty, and whilst dancing gracefully, looked towards him with a captivating smile.

Samson tried to remain stern and aloof, but at the same time he followed every movement of her beautiful body. He forced himself to look away, but as Delilah continued to sing and gaze longingly at him, his heart went out to her. Delilah and her beauty had gained the victory. . . .

In her luxurious home Delilah, beautifully attired, awaited a visit from Samson, who for some while had been her lover.

From time to time she started up impatiently, and looked out to see if he was coming.

But the truth was that Samson was tiring of her. She had sensed this for some time, and it hurt her pride. Consequently, she was ready to revenge herself for the slight.

Fitfully she remembered the first days of their love and how completely he had been in her power. She bit her lip and grew angry. Then, hearing a noise, she turned suddenly, a smile of welcome on her face.

But it was not Samson who entered. It was the High Priest of Dagon, and he confirmed what she had already suspected—that Samson was untrue to her, had grown tired of her.

"Gold shall be yours, Delilah," the priest went on. "Much wealth you shall have if you will entice and deliver up to us the Israelitish warrior."

Haughtily Delilah disdained the High Priest's gold. It did not need a bribe to make her revenge herself upon a false admirer.

So the High Priest of Dagon went away, with the assurance that Samson would be caught. The secret of the Israelite's strength had long baffled him, but with Delilah on his side it might be extracted and the warrior stripped of his power.

The High Priest then set a secret guard about the house, and soon afterwards Samson, reluctant and ashamed, came along. He realized that he was tired of Delilah, yet he could not free himself entirely from her. He was ashamed of his conduct, yet Delilah's beauty and subtlety still allured.

Delilah was clever, and on seeing him she sensed his mood. With all her wiles she sought to captivate him once again and bring him under her spell.

So cleverly did she act her part that within a short while the Israelite was absolutely in her power.

She then urged him, as she had often done before, to tell her the secret of his strength, but in spite of his passion for her he refused.

However, Samson was so much under Delilah's spell that he could not resist for long, and when she moved away, piqued, apparently, he scarcely hesitated before following her. At all costs he would retain her love.

And thus Delilah triumphed, for when the soldiers who eventually came up from below advanced upon Samson, the mighty, he found himself unable to withstand their attack.

Then it was that he realized the truth. In spite of all Delilah's feigned passion, in spite of all her words of love, she was the enemy of his country and of his God. He was betrayed.

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In the Prison of Gaza was Samson, once so mighty, but now shorn of his great strength.

His eyes had been put out, and he was forced to work the treadmill.

Wearily he went on with his task, and all the while the laughing, jeering Philistines mocked at his misery, while from outside the prison came the shouts of his own people scorning him.

Day in and day out Samson worked the treadmill, and then, on a Philistine holiday, he was dragged out of prison, bound, and put in a triumphal procession.

It was the last straw. His spirit was broken.

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In the interior of the great Temple of Dagon, before a mighty assembly of Philistines, the High Priest, assisted by the beautiful Delilah, served their god.

Heathen orgies were gone through, and then the Philistines demanded that Samson should be brought in to make game for them.

A shout of applause went up at this, and soon the blind man appeared, a mighty figure still, led by a little child.

The great crowd laughed and jeered, and Samson tried not to grow angry. But when Delilah stepped forward, and dancing lightly before him, told to the multitude of his love for her, and taunted him, his hands clenched madly.

Then the High Priest poured out an offering of wine to Dagon whom he declared was mightier than the God of the Hebrews. At this the Philistines shouted derisively.

The slight to his God affected Samson even more than did Delilah's sneers, and telling the little child who had led him to the temple to go away, he addressed himself to his Maker.

"Oh, Lord God, remember me," he cried. "Remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, if only this once, that I may be avenged for the loss of my eyes."

And God heard his prayers, for his great strength returned. Exultant he flung back his head, then gripping the two mighty marble pillars between which he stood, he pulled with all his might.

The huge pillars cracked. There were shrieks of fear and dismay. But Samson did not desist, and the whole Temple of Dagon collapsed on the multitude. And with the Philistines perished both Samson, the mighty, and Delilah, the woman who had caused his downfall.

Manon Lescaut

Giacomo Puccini (1858–1925) *is another famous Italian composer. He followed Verdi as leader of composers of the Italian tradition.* MANON LESCAUT, *staged at Turin in* 1893, *was his first great success.*

A beautiful girl alighted from the coach.

Manon Lescaut

IN the courtyard of an old inn at Amiens, near to the Paris Gate, were a number of students and young men, drinking, gossiping, and singing snatches of songs while they awaited the arrival of the coach.

A crowd of work-girls, having finished their day's labours, were passing by, and they exchanged pleasantries with the young men.

Amongst the students was one youth who paid no attention to the girls or their amorous glances; and when his companions chaffed him about his indifference he still took no notice.

He was a young man of good birth and breeding, named Chevalier des Grieux, and although he was poetical and rather passionate by nature, never yet had he been in love, although his merry friends assured him his indifference to the workgirls' charms was a sign that he must already be in love with some one.

The coach drew up with a clatter and amongst the passengers who alighted was a very lovely girl, accompanied by an elderly fop, richly dressed, and a young man, her brother.

The girl was Manon Lescaut, whom her parents were sending to a convent under charge of the brother. The elderly fop was a very wealthy Baron, Geronte de Ravoir, a man of dissolute habits, who had become fascinated by Manon's loveliness. Her brother was encouraging the Baron, for he hoped through her beauty to obtain a large slice of the amorous Baron's wealth.

The Baron was on his way to Paris. He desired above everything to possess Manon, and he invited Lescaut and his sister to join him at supper, an invitation which was accepted.

Lescaut hoped to barter for his sister, quite indifferent to the desires of his parents. But Manon herself was sad at the thought of entering a convent and renouncing the joys of life. She was anxious to get as much enjoyment as possible.

Young Des Grieux could hardly take his eyes from the girl, and seizing the very first opportunity he engaged her in conversation, first inquiring her name and destination.

She told him her name and confessed that she dreaded entering the convent. Full of anger that so beautiful a creature should be hidden from the world, the young man urged her to think no more about taking the veil, but to trust him, and he would find some means of winning her freedom.

Young though she was, Manon had a passionate nature. She longed for beauty and love, and as she rather shyly looked at Des Grieux she felt her heart beating faster. He, in turn, was strongly attracted by her, and at this first meeting the two young people realized that they had fallen in love.

Before joining her brother, who now called impatiently, Manon promised to meet Des Grieux alone later on. Delighted at finding the dream of his heart realized in this lovely girl, he withdrew from the rest of the roisterers.

A little later on, however, he was joined by one of the young students, who told him that he had overheard the Baron planning to abduct Manon that night, carry her off to Paris, and establish her there as his mistress.

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Furious at the idea, Des Grieux begged the other to help him, and as the Baron had already arranged with

the landlord of the inn to have a post-chaise ready for him behind the inn that night, Des Grieux planned to make use of this carriage and carry off Manon himself.

Meanwhile Manon's brother was gambling and drinking with some of the wildest of the students, and neither he nor the Baron noticed that Manon had left them and gone out into the courtyard.

Des Grieux joined her there and told her of his plan. At first she was afraid, but finally her love for the handsome Des Grieux overcame her fears, and she declared that she would go anywhere with him. Together they entered the chaise and drove off towards Paris.

Mad with rage at having been tricked, the Baron stamped about the courtyard. Young Lescaut kept calm, however. He knew that his sister loved luxury and ease, knew that she desired gaiety, and he had found out that her lover had small means, although he came of noble birth. So he consoled the furious Baron by telling him that with his wealth he could still win her from Des Grieux.

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Des Grieux could only afford a cottage for his loved one, but so far as his slender purse would allow he and Manon made this beautiful, and for a little while their love was enough to console Manon for all she had given up.

Yet she pined for gaiety when her lover was not with her, and one day in his absence the Baron, having watched his chance, came to the little cottage and offered her all the delights that his wealth could buy.

He told her of the magnificent house over which she would be mistress, the rich clothes and jewels she would wear, the comforts that would surround her; and Manon allowed herself to be swayed by the wonderful picture. She left the humble cottage for a luxurious home in Paris.

Here she reigned like a queen.

Her brother also was provided with all that his pleasure-loving soul desired, yet he realized that his sister was not happy. He could see that she still longed for her lover, and he guessed that in a short time luxury and wealth would no longer satisfy her.

He again began to make plans, and happening to meet Des Grieux, who was utterly disconsolate at the loss of Manon, urged him to gamble, telling him that he would thus win wealth which would enable him to provide Manon with the luxuries she desired. He even went to the length of arranging a meeting between his sister and her lover.

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Manon was now beginning to tire of everything around her, and the Baron, afraid of losing his lovely treasure, had arranged to give his mistress a wonderful musical treat.

He had written verses in praise of her beauty, and now engaged musicians and singers to come and perform before her, as well as a dancing master to give her lessons in the minuet. However, taking advantage of a short period when he was absent, young Lescaut brought Des Grieux to see his sister.

Des Grieux had intended to reproach her, but meeting her again in all her loveliness he could only utter words of love and endearment. Clasping her in his arms he kissed her tenderly.

Manon fell under the spell of love, and returned his kisses passionately, forgetful of everything save that the one true lover of her life was with her.

Des Grieux, too, forgot all save her, and when the Baron burst in upon them, furious at finding his mistress in the arms of another man, they still paid no heed.

Beside himself with jealousy, the Baron rushed out to the street, and denounced Manon to the authorities

as a woman of ill repute. So emphatic was he in his charges that the authorities entered the hotel and carried off Manon to prison.

Des Grieux, almost frantic, tried to save her, but everything was in vain. She was condemned to be deported from France.

Her lover made an unsuccessful effort to rescue her from prison, then finding every chance of saving her useless, he offered himself as a cabin boy on the vessel that was to bear her away.

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Penniless and friendless, the two unhappy lovers went out into the strange land to which Manon had been deported . . .

Starvation met them, and mad with despair Des Grieux sought vainly for food and water to save the girl he adored. . . . He returned empty-handed to find her almost dying. He would have started again on another desperate search, had not Manon called him back.

Then in his arms, looking up adoringly into his eyes, the butterfly woman died.

Heartbroken, realizing that she had gone from him for ever, Des Grieux cried out in sorrow, then fell senseless beside her body.

Poor Manon Lescaut ! Her beauty had brought her ruin and death instead of the abiding love for which she craved.

La Tosca

Another of Puccini's famous operas. It was produced in 1900, *following the composer's remarkable success with* MANON LESCAUT *and* LA BOHÈME. *The opera is founded on the play of the same name which was written by the famous French dramatist Sardou for Sarah Bernhardt.*

La Tosca

THE Church of Saint Andrea Alle Valle in Rome, with its various chapels. An easel set up with an unfinished picture. . . .

Into the church, breathless and spent with running, there came a dishevelled figure, stealing stealthily towards the altar, fearful of who might be there.

Then as he saw the easel of the artist the fugitive crouched in the shadows.

One minute later, and drawing from his clothing a key, he stole forward and unlocked the door of a little side chapel, and disappeared within. He was a State prisoner, Cesare Angelotti by name, and the key had been sent to him by his sister, the Lady Attavanti.

He had scarcely gone when Cavaradossi, the artist, appeared, picked up his brushes, and began again on his picture of the Magdalene.

Just as he started, the old Sacristan of the church entered and set down a basket of fruit—for the refreshment of the artist.

But no sooner had the eyes of the old man fallen on the wet canvas than he started back, for the features of the Magdalene resembled those of the Lady Attavanti who often came to pray there. He spoke of this to the artist, and Cavaradossi confessed that it was the sight of this lady at prayer which had really inspired him to paint his Magdalene.

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Mumbling, the old man went off, and Cavaradossi

Her lover was placed against the wall.

continued with his painting. Suddenly he heard a noise behind him, and turned sharply.

Out of the Attavanti Chapel came his old friend Angelotti, whom he imagined a prisoner. Full of joy, he shook his hand gleefully and promised to help him to escape.

He flew to the outer door, locked this on the inside, and returned to his friend. But before they had time to decide what was best to be done they heard a woman's voice calling from outside.

Cavaradossi looked rather startled, for he recognized the voice as that of Floria Tosca, his fiancée. She was a very beautiful singer and actress.

Uncertain of her attitude towards his friend, however, Cavaradossi bade him return to the chapel, and at the same time thrust into his hands the basket of fruit.

Then he hurried to the door and unlocked it for Tosca to enter. She flashed indignant eyes around, protesting at being kept waiting. And with the passionate nature of the South she at once suspected some rival.

It was only after assuring her time and again of his undying love, that Cavaradossi managed to bring back the smiles to her face.

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When Tosca had gone Angelotti came out of hiding. He had eaten the fruit and was refreshed, and Cavaradossi at once began to plan a means of escape for him.

The artist described how the chapel led out into a garden and explained that at the far end was a path which led to his own villa.

He said that in the garden of his villa was a dried-up well, half-way down which was a secret opening leading to a cave. There the outcast might hide.

Angelotti was full of gratitude, and picked up the woman's clothes which his sister had left for him.

But just as he was about to go, the sound of a cannon warned them that his escape had been discovered.

He informed his friend then that he had an enemy, Scarpia, the Chief of Police, and that it was through him that he had been imprisoned. He seemed so afraid of Scarpia that the painter decided he should not go alone, but proceeded to accompany him and see him in safety.

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The two disappeared, and hardly had they gone when numbers of people poured into the church, hurriedly following the old Sacristan. And as they chattered, Scarpia and his followers suddenly appeared in the doorway.

Instantly there was silence, for every one feared and hated the Chief of Police. In loud tones Scarpia announced that a State prisoner had escaped, and that it was believed he had taken refuge in this very church.

The Attavanti Chapel was the first place he visited —where Angelotti had concealed himself. A fan lay there, a fan which bore the arms of the Attavanti, and this aroused Scarpia's suspicions.

He prowled around, and then examining the half-finished picture on which the paint was yet wet, he made inquiries of the Sacristan as to who painted it, to discover that it was by Cavaradossi, the lover of Tosca.

Now it so happened that Scarpia had fallen in love with Tosca, and he had made a vow that he would possess her.

He knew she hated and feared him, so looking at the painting he decided to use this opportunity to try to make her jealous about her lover.

* * * * *

Tosca returned to the church, hoping to find her lover there, but was much disturbed at sight of Scarpia.

The cunning Chief of Police, showing her the fan, told her he had picked it up near the easel.

As he pointed out the Attavanti arms upon the fan, and looked meaningly at the half-finished picture of the lovely Magdalene, he achieved the first part of his object, for Tosca became madly jealous and at last broke into a passion of tears.

Finally, when she left the church, Scarpia sent three of his men to spy upon her, hoping that by so doing he might discover the escaped prisoner whom he knew to be a close friend of the artist.

* * * * *

The Chief of Police was madly in love with Tosca, and he did not care what unscrupulous means he used.

When he had eaten his supper that night he called a servant and sent a message to Tosca, commanding her to come to his room when her performance was over.

Just then one of his spies returned with the news that Tosca had been followed to a villa outside the city, but that after entering she had quickly returned. When they searched the place they found only her lover, the painter, who denied all knowledge of Angelotti. But they had arrested Cavaradossi and he was here to be interrogated.

Face to face with Scarpia, Cavaradossi denied all knowledge of the fugitive.

Scarpia was furious, but just then Tosca appeared in the doorway, having hurried to obey the summons.

Seeing her lover, and realizing his danger, she rushed forward and clasped him in her arms. He eagerly whispered to her to say nothing of what she had seen at the villa. Just as he won her promise of silence, she was dragged away from him, and the painter was led away to the torture chamber, where Scarpia hoped to drive him into submission.

Tosca turned pale as her lover disappeared. By and by she heard groans, and knew that the torture was being applied.

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After a little while Tosca could endure hearing her lover's cries no longer, and she murmured the secret of the well in the painter's garden.

Content that she was speaking truth, Scarpia ordered the torture to be stopped, and sent off his messengers to arrest Angelotti. Cavaradossi came in just in time to hear directions given, and he turned to Tosca, bitterly upbraiding her for not keeping faith.

Scarpia then informed Cavaradossi that he should die at sunrise the next morning, and as the guards dragged the painter away, Tosca turned to Scarpia in despair and begged for mercy for her lover.

Pitifully she pleaded for his life, offering her jewels and her treasures, but all her bribes he laughed to scorn. The more she wept, the more she pleaded, the more desirable she became in his eyes, and at last, growing bolder because of her distress, he offered her her lover's life if she would consent to become his mistress.

And then, as he came nearer with outstretched arms, and Tosca understood that this hideous proposal was indeed something she must consider, she shrank back shuddering.

Just as she was deliberating what to do, Scarpia's messengers arrived with the news that Angelotti had been discovered in the well in the villa garden, but that rather than be taken alive he had swallowed poison.

The chief spy then inquired if the other prisoner, Cavaradossi, was to be executed, and Scarpia turned to Tosca who stood by trembling.

"His fate is in your hands," he said. "What shall it be?"

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Driven into a corner, Tosca sobbed out her consent

in order to save her lover's life, but she demanded that the painter should be set instantly at liberty.

Scarpia told her this could not be. Since he had been condemned to death, the apparent execution of Cavaradossi must take place, but he said that a mock execution would be arranged at dawn the next day, blank cartridges being used by the firing party.

He promised that Tosca herself should be there, said that Cavaradossi should fall and feign death when the shots were fired and that she should take him away afterwards.

But whilst he was telling Tosca this he was using signs to his chief spy, such signs being well understood. They meant that the painter *was* to die!

The spies went out, and Scarpia turned to the beautiful girl, eager to claim his reward.

Tosca tried to postpone the dreaded moment, so in order to lengthen time, begged him to write out for her and her lover a safe conduct pass which they could use on the morrow after the mock execution.

Scarpia laughed, and sat down to write out the pass. And as she watched him a desperate hope grew in the girl's heart. She walked behind him and from the table took up a sharp-bladed knife, which cautiously she concealed behind her.

When Scarpia had written out the pass he got to his feet, eager to take the beautiful girl in his arms.

But with a cry of anger Tosca raised the sharp-bladed knife and stabbed him to the heart. A few minutes later he was dead.

* * * * *

Dawn was breaking when Tosca reached the fortress of Saint Angelo where the execution was to take place. Producing her safe conduct pass she obtained entry to the fortress, and from there to the battlements, and here she saw her lover.

Rushing forward, with a cry of joy, Tosca flung her-

self into his arms, and producing the pass told him joyously that all was now going to be well. Then she drilled him in his part, carefully explaining how he must feign death.

When the sun rose the chief spy appeared with the firing party. Cavaradossi was placed against the wall, and the firing party took their places. The volley rang out, and Cavaradossi fell.

Scarpia's chief spy walked forward, covered the body with a cloth and the firing party marched off, leaving Tosca alone with her lover.

Quivering all over, yet convinced that everything was right, she rushed forward and spoke her lover's name. But there was no answer.

Eagerly she called him again, telling him the soldiers had gone, and that it was time they got away. Still silence !

Then Tosca grew afraid and snatched away the cloth. And to her horror she saw that her lover was dead. She flung herself weeping upon the body, calling in vain on Cavaradossi to answer her.

Crying pitifully she was found by Scarpia's soldiers who had discovered the dead body of their chief. And as Tosca heard the word " murder " she leapt to her feet in fear.

The broken-hearted girl had no need to live now. Her lover lay dead at her feet. So springing upon the parapet of the battlements she flung herself down, hundreds of feet below.

Hansel and Gretel

This opera is the masterpiece of Engelbert Humperdinck (1854–1921). *The libretto, written by the composer's sister, was founded on one of the best known of the Grimm fairy stories. The opera was first produced in London in* 1895. *Humperdinck was a great friend of Wagner, whom he assisted to produce* PARSIFAL *at Baireuth.*

Facing them was a house made of sweetmeats.

Hansel and Gretel

ONCE upon a time there was a poor woodcutter named Peter, who, in order to add to his earnings, brought home bundles of twigs and saplings with which he made brooms to sell.

To help him, Gertrude, his wife, and his little son and daughter, Hansel and Gretel, also bound the twigs into bundles.

But broom-making did not pay very well, the children were often hungry, and Peter and Gertrude were hard put to know how to make ends meet.

One day the mother of Hansel and Gretel went out, with strict injunctions that the kiddies were to go on making brooms until her return. When she had gone, they shouted with joy, for they discovered a big brown jug on the table, filled to the brim with milk. This meant that when their mother returned, there would be something good for supper.

The thought of the milk pudding she would make turned their little heads. Hansel flung down his bundle of twigs and began to dance merrily and sing. And Gretel, too, joined in the dance.

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Whilst they were dancing and singing, Mother Gertrude returned, and the sight of the unfinished brooms so angered her that she darted towards her mischief-loving son to box his ears.

Ducking to avoid the blow, Hansel dodged her, and in her excitement and anger Gertrude knocked the brown jug instead, which rolled over on the floor, spilling all the milk.

There was consternation indeed as they realized what had happened, and the three looked at one another in dismay. This meant no supper, and they were all hungry, also Father Peter would soon be home, hungry, too.

"Here!" cried their mother, taking down a wicker basket from the wall, "there are plenty of wild strawberries in the forest. Go and fill this basket with them, and do not dare to return until the basket is quite full."

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Presently Peter the woodman came singing along the forest path, a basket on his back. He had sold his stock of brooms in the villages near the fringes of the forest; and unstrapping the basket from his shoulders, opened it to show his wife the store of good food he had brought home.

Greatly delighted, Gertrude began to prepare supper, while Peter stretched himself and asked for the children.

"They ought to be back by now!" exclaimed Gertrude. "I sent them into the forest to pick wild strawberries. The forest is wide, but it is safe."

But she opened her eyes wide in horror when her husband told her that in one part of the forest there lived an old witch who devoured little children whom she lured to her house by a tempting array of goodies and sweetmeats arranged outside.

The terrified parents, forgetful of the dainties laid out so enticingly for supper, left their hut and rushed out into the forest, calling to their children despairingly as they went.

But there was no reply, save the echoes of their own voices.

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When Hansel and Gretel left the cottage, swinging their basket, they were very happy, delighted to be free of their broom-making tasks, and happy to be out in the lovely forest glades.

At first they did not bother greatly over the strawberry picking, but like little wild creatures of the woods, played games, danced and sang, listened to the song of the birds and the call of the cuckoo, whom they mocked in mischievous glee.

It took a long time to fill the basket, for they were more intent on play than picking berries, and when they had it partly full Gretel must needs stop to gather flowers, which she fashioned into a wreath.

With this Hansel crowned her Queen of the Woods, and as he knelt before her to do homage, his laughing sister popped into his mouth one ripe, red strawberry and then another, finally taking one or two herself.

Before this the children had forgotten that they were hungry, but the taste of the berries reawakened that gnawing pain, and scarcely conscious of what they were doing, they ate the whole of the strawberries in the basket. But when they reached the end of them they looked at each other in dismay.

What was to be done! An empty basket, twilight fast closing in, and the dark glades of the forest growing darker at every minute. . . . They began to feel afraid.

The only thing to do was to get home as quickly as possible, so they started to look for the path that should lead them to the hut among the pines. But the more they searched, the deeper they seemed to plunge into the forest, and the darker it grew, and the more frightened they became.

At last Hansel and Gretel knew the truth. They were lost in the forest!

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Gretel began to cry, and Hansel manfully tried to comfort her, but he, too, was afraid.

At last, very weary, the children lay down beneath the trees and were soon fast asleep. . . .

In the morning the Dawn Fairy appeared with her

attendants, and with a cluster of bluebells, shook dew-drops over the children, waking them, but disappearing before they realized she was not a part of one of their dreams.

Hansel and Gretel stared at each other in bewilderment, for in front of them they found a mossy bank instead of their own little beds ; and the sky overhead, instead of their own hut rafters. But gradually they remembered they had gone to sleep. And then, as the sunbeams reached them, they cried out in delight and amazement. For there, facing them, was the most wonderful fairy house—a house made of cake, with a roof of chocolate, and windows of sugar-candy.

To the left of the little house was a huge wooden cage, and to the right a curious, large oven, both cage and oven being joined to the house by a fence of gingerbread.

Little did the children know what this house was. They were fascinated by the sight of a dream house in reality, and approaching it, they broke off a tiny piece of the sugar to taste. It was real. Another, and still another piece they took, nibbling away to their heart's content.

Hansel was busy stuffing himself with chocolate from the roof, and Gretel with sugar-candy from the window, when the door opened, and the Witch of the Woods peeped out.

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Now this wonderful sweetmeat house was made solely to entrap little children, and as she saw the two, merry-eyed kiddies munching away, the old witch laughed horribly.

The children heard it and were afraid, but it was too late to do anything. In a second she had flung a rope around poor Hansel.

Then with a juniper branch and mysterious words and signs, she placed both children under a spell, so

that they were helpless and unable to get away from her.

But Gretel was a wise little maiden, and when she saw the old witch push her brother into the cage, using incantations and curious gestures, the child took notice of all that the old woman did, and stored up in her mind the words she employed.

Regardless of the feelings of the little girl, the Witch of the Woods calmly informed her that she was going to fatten up her brother and eat him, and although Gretel wept and implored her to have mercy, the ogress only laughed and talked the more of what a tasty morsel he would be.

She then ordered Gretel into the house to work, and the child obeyed, but again she watched and listened. Bidding the little girl lay the table, the witch snatched up her broomstick and careered gaily about, then going outside she bade Gretel bring a basket of food to feed and fatten Hansel in the cage.

Day after day this went on, and every morning the old Witch would order Hansel to stretch out his finger, so that she could feel if he were growing fat. But Hansel was crafty, and having discovered that the old ogress was short-sighted, he held out a bone instead. When the witch felt this she mumbled and grumbled, declaring he was taking a very long time to fatten.

Despairingly, she bade Gretel bring him yet another basket of food, but as soon as her back was turned, Gretel seized the magic juniper branch which she had left behind, and calling to memory the enchantments she had heard the old woman use, spoke these words herself, made the same gestures, and lo and behold, Hansel was set free from the enchantment, and all his strength returned!

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Disappointed about her meal, the old Witch now turned her attention to Gretel, who was certainly

plump enough. She determined to put her in the oven instead of her brother.

Opening the door, the wicked old creature called the little girl, and told her to look inside the oven and tell her if it were hot enough to bake. Her eyes gleamed evilly, for she intended to push Gretel inside when once she stood beside the open oven door.

But Gretel understood her thoughts just as well as if she had spoken them aloud, and by this time Hansel was out of the cage, although unseen by the ogress who believed him safely bound. So he drew near to Gretel, who pretended to the old woman that she did not understand what she meant her to do.

"How can I get in!" she cried. "I do not know how to do it."

"Stupid girl," cried the witch. "The opening is big enough. Look, I could even get into it myself."

That was just what Hansel and Gretel were waiting for.

As the bad old creature opened the door and felt the heat with her skinny hands, the brother and sister rushed forward, pushed the witch into the oven, shutting the door behind her and bolting it fast.

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Bang! Bang!

A great noise and crackling, succeeded by an extraordinary explosion, and the oven burst into pieces. The gingerbread figures changed into real little boys and girls, taking on their own forms but still with closed eyes and motionless limbs.

The enchantments of the witch were over. They were set free, yet they were lifeless. It was then that Gretel remembered the magic juniper branch, and taking this she waved it over them, murmuring the incantations of the witch. The sleeping children woke up, opened their eyes, took hands, and danced gaily round, rejoicing in the death of their enemy and the frustration of her wicked plans.

Just as they were about to drag out of the oven the huge gingerbread figure into which the old witch had baked herself, round the trees came two sorrowful figures, bent with grief and haggard-eyed.

These were Peter and Gertrude, seeking their lost children.

They recognized Hansel and Gretel at once, and clasping them to their hearts, rejoiced to find them safe, and still more thankful to find that the Witch of the Woods was no more!

And they lived happy ever after!

Der Rosenkavalier

This is the work of Richard Strauss (1864–), *who is well known to London music-lovers. Strauss was thoroughly educated in music right from childhood. Later, he came under Wagnerian influence—an influence which is obvious in many of his works. This opera—the name of which means* THE ROSE BEARER—*was first produced in* 1911. *Strauss may well be regarded as the leading German composer of his generation.*

Faces grinned from all parts of the room.

Der Rosenkavalier

THE Princess von Werdenberg was unhappily married to an old Field-Marshal who cared nothing for her. But the Princess was young and beautiful, so that she quickly discovered an admirer.

The opera opens early one morning in the boudoir of the Princess. She is seated with her lover, Octavian, who is of noble birth and also her own kinsman.

He is younger than she, very handsome and gallant, and the young Princess, disappointed in her marriage and pining for romance, believes she has found love at last.

With his arms around her, she yet listens anxiously, for at any moment the husband Field-Marshal may return. He is out on a hunting expedition. At the door of her boudoir she has placed faithful servants to warn her should he come back unexpectedly.

Suddenly a noise is heard and the lovers draw apart. There is no time for Octavian to get away, and the Princess stares around the room for a hiding-place. In a recess of the room is a large cupboard full of clothes, and she hurriedly pushes her lover in there, urging him to remain hidden, as her husband has returned.

But it is not her husband, after all. The man outside arguing with the servants is her cousin—the Baron Ochs von Lerchenau, a man of dissolute life and habits whom the Princess dislikes.

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Just then Octavian comes out of the cupboard,

dressed in female clothes, and the Princess steps back in amazement. The two laugh, for the slender youth makes a very pretty girl; and Octavian suggests that his Princess shall pass him off as a new waiting woman.

The Princess loves a joke and agrees; and when the old Baron bursts in full of anger against those who tried to keep him back, he looks at the maid instead of the mistress and smiles at her. The Princess frowns and asks him why he has come so early in the morning.

Hurriedly he recovers his manners, and stoops low over the hand of his kinswoman. But at the same time he continues to smile at the "girl," and whilst talking to the Princess attempts to make signs to her.

The Princess sees all this by-play and is much amused, but she pretends not to notice, and casually introduces her waiting woman as Mariandal, and asks for a cup of chocolate to be prepared.

Whilst the Baron is drinking this and slyly smiling at Mariandal, he tells his cousin that at last he is going to marry and settle down.

The Princess, knowing what a flirt he is, expresses surprise, but the Baron owns that he is penniless and must get money from somewhere. There is no one in his own set whom he can marry—at least no one who has money enough and is eligible will have him, so he has decided to marry Sophia, the daughter of a very rich merchant. He will get the merchant's money, and the daughter will get his title, so he thinks this an excellent exchange.

The fact that he has led a dissolute life and that Sophia is a sweet young girl means nothing to him.

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Then the reason for his early morning call is explained. According to the custom of the country, one of high rank like himself has to send a silver rose

to his betrothed as a pledge of his love, and the "rose-bearer" has likewise to be of noble birth, and preferably of near kin.

Now he, through leading a wild life, has no friends. He does not know a kinsman who will carry out this delicate mission for him, therefore he begs the Princess to help him. Can she suggest anyone as rose-bearer?

The Princess calls Mariandal and bids her fetch a certain jewelled medallion in which is set a miniature of Octavian. She shows this to the old Baron and asks if he would like the original of the miniature to go to his bride elect with the silver rose. He is delighted!

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The Baron next attempts to flirt with the pretty waiting woman, asks her to have supper with him that night, and actually tries to steal a kiss.

At last, slamming the door in his face, Octavian escapes from him, and the business of the day begins for the Princess—a stream of people coming to see her on all sorts of matters.

Some have things to sell, others have come to beg for charity, and with the rest there comes the Baron's attorney, whom the Baron draws away to make arrangements for the marriage contract.

Two Italians, Valachi and Annina, come in with the rest of the applicants for the favour of the Princess, and they sum up the Baron as being likely to employ them, for they are the type who live upon their wits. When he goes out they follow him.

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The next scene is set in the house of Sophia's father. Everything betokens wealth, and in a beautiful gown, Sophia, the bride-elect awaits the arrival of the rose-bearer.

Neighbours and friends think it a wonderful achieve-

ment for a merchant's daughter to marry a Baron, and outside the place is thronged with onlookers who desire to catch a glimpse of the courier.

Octavian enters at last, dressed in white and silver, and carrying in his hand the silver rose. In courtly fashion he bends on one knee, and presents this to Sophia, and the two look into each other's eyes.

In that instant the mischief is done! With both of them it is a case of love at first sight!

Soon, the ceremony of the rose over, the doors are opened and the dissolute Baron is announced. He quickly shows himself in his true colours, for he treats Sophia with such boorish familiarity that she flushes red with indignation.

Then he starts to make love to her in such a way that the modest girl can stand it no longer. She wrenches herself free and tries to escape, but this only serves to delight the Baron.

Finally the Baron is called from the room to examine the marriage contract and Sophia finds herself with Octavian.

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She begs him to help her, declaring that she will never marry the Baron. Then, forgetting everything in the world but his love, Octavian takes her in his arms.

The two Italian spies, Valachi and Annina, have followed the Baron, and, hoping to find out something worth their while, have concealed themselves behind a curtain—to see Sophia and Octavian together.

They rush off to tell the bridegroom that his bride-to-be is in the arms of a lover.

The Baron, however, when he enters the room, only laughs at Sophia's confusion, and chaffs the two young people on their hasty love-making. He does not mind if his wife has got a lover so long as he gets her money. And he seizes her by the hand and attempts to draw

her into the adjoining room to sign the marriage contract. But Sophia refuses.

Octavian can bear it no longer, and he now orders the Baron to cease troubling the girl who has no intention of marrying him. The old man only laughs, so Octavian draws his sword and angrily challenges the Baron to a duel.

The latter refuses at first, but Octavian forces him to fight, and within a few seconds the Baron is wounded. It is only a slight wound, but terrified at the sight of blood the Baron drops his sword, calls loudly for help, and declares himself badly hurt.

Sophia's father bustles in, sends for a surgeon and scolds his daughter, declaring that the marriage must go on.

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Octavian sees that he can do nothing for the moment, for Sophia is sent off to her own room. The surgeon arrives and tells the Baron there is nothing the matter with him, so Octavian goes off and the cowardly Baron is left alone to rest.

While he is resting the Italian Annina steals in and hands him a note from Mariandal, the waiting woman of the Princess.

This note says that Mariandal will gladly sup that night with the Baron. The latter, of course, is in high glee. He thinks he has made another conquest.

When Octavian left Sophia he met the two Italian spies and engaged them. It was he who sent Annina with the note from "Mariandal."

Octavian has named a certain inn for the meeting place, and he now makes arrangements to play a joke on the vain Baron. He hires several people to come with him to the inn, and once more dresses himself in girl's clothes, pretending to be Mariandal.

When he meets the Baron the old man becomes very amorous, but unlike Sophia, Mariandal does not

flout him. Indeed "she" pretends to be pleased with his love-making.

Previously Octavian has arranged a series of signals with his hired helpers, who are hidden around the room behind curtains.

The Baron coaxes his new sweetheart to drink wine. "She" obeys, and when the Baron attempts to take her in his arms and kiss her he is startled by seeing a number of jeering faces appear all round the room.

These faces disappear, and he rubs his eyes, thinking his meal has not agreed with him. But just as he begins to make love to Mariandal again, a lady attired in mourning and attended by four small children appears. She flings herself into the arms of the old man, declaring herself to be his deserted but still loving wife, and the four children cling to him and loudly acclaim him as "Papa."

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The old Baron rubs his forehead, trying to remember who the lady is, but as he has had so many love affairs he cannot recall whom she may be, so blusteringly he goes to the window and calls for the police.

However, when the Chief Commissioner of Police appears the Baron finds himself in a still worse plight, for he is asked awkward questions and accused of abducting Mariandal without the consent of her parents.

Whilst he is still wondering how to extricate himself Sophia and her father arrive, and this makes matters worse, for to appease the Chief Commissioner he has just said that Mariandal is engaged to him.

When Sophia's father hears this he gets angry, so angry, in fact, that he is taken ill. Sophia helps him into another room, and Octavian tells the Chief Commissioner enough of the truth to convince him that it is all farce. Then Octavian retires for a moment and dons his own clothes, returning to the room just as the Princess von Werdenberg enters.

The Baron is absolutely dumbfounded, and he gets another shock when Sophia comes in and declares that her father is withdrawing his consent to the marriage.

It is at this point that the Princess explains that Mariandal is really her kinsman Octavian and that this hoax had been planned and carried out by him. So the discomfited Baron, aware that he has been making love to a young man disguised as a girl, leaves as quickly as he can.

The Princess now realizes that Octavian's devotion for her is not real love after all and that he cares for Sophia. So she bids him woo the girl and goes to get the consent of Sophia's father to the union.

The young rose-bearer takes Sophia in his arms, kisses her and begs her to be his bride, and the merchant returns to the room and gives them his blessing.

Mignon

Ambroise Thomas (1811–96), *the celebrated French composer, wrote this opera. Thomas achieved a deal of fame whilst still quite young. At the age of seventeen he gained first prize for piano playing at the Paris Conservatoire; at eighteen he won first prize for harmony, and he also won the Prix de Rome when he was but twenty. Soon after, he began to write operas, eventually composing* MIGNON, *one of his greatest successes.*

The infuriated gipsy would have struck her had not a handsome youth rushed forward.

Mignon

IT was a fête day in a little country town in Germany, and the townspeople rubbed shoulders with country cousins, one and all ready for a jovial time. Thus, when a party of wandering gipsies entered the place, singing and playing, they were greeted with shouts of welcome and applause.

There was only one old man who did not applaud, however, and he was a wandering musician, Lothario the Harper, who was looked upon as half witted. He wore tattered clothes and his shoes were worn and dusty.

Yet there was something noble in his features which no person could understand, since apparently he depended upon his music to provide him with bread. Nobody knew who he was, or whence he came.

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The gipsies played again and again and the onlookers continued to applaud. Then, seeing that the crowd would pay for entertainment, Giarno, the chief of the gipsies, stepped forward and announced that the most beautiful and talented of all the gipsy maidens would now give an exhibition of dancing.

As he spoke he pushed forward Mignon, a lovely young girl, in whose face fear and anger strove for the mastery. It was easy to see that she was afraid of Giarno, and yet when he curtly bade her dance she shook her head and refused to obey him.

The old man gazed sympathetically at the beautiful girl, and when the infuriated gipsy lifted a thick stick

to strike her, he hurried forward as fast as his legs would allow.

"Courage, maiden! I will protect you!" he cried.

But at that moment, and even before the old man could reach her side, a handsome youth rushed forward, snatching the stick from the gipsy's hand.

"Dare to lay a finger on this maiden, and you shall answer with your life," cried the young man boldly.

Giarno, a thorough coward at heart, immediately freed Mignon, and hurriedly explained to the young man that he only wished her to dance so that the troupe might be provided with money for necessities.

The young man tossed him a few coins, which apparently contented him, for the gipsies went off and were soon lost to sight in the crowd.

The young man, Wilhelm Meister, walked on to a refreshment garden near by, He was a rich student from Vienna, and this encounter with the gipsy fired his blood and set him hoping for other adventures.

Mignon was not really a gipsy at all. She had been stolen when a child from her home by the cruel Giarno, who had beaten and cowed her into submission. But as she grew older, resentment rose in her heart.

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Mignon's rescue by the handsome youth had been witnessed by two people standing on a balcony overlooking the street—Filena, a coquettish and beautiful actress, and Laertes, an actor. Filena was attracted by Wilhelm Meister's looks, and she meant to make his acquaintance.

Seeing him walk towards the refreshment gardens, the actor and actress followed, and here Laertes fell into conversation with Wilhelm, telling him of the misfortunes of the company, and at the same time extolling the charms of Filena; and when the young man was introduced to her, she exerted every art in her power to infatuate him.

Time passed quickly and pleasantly and at last the actor and actress were forced to go.

When Wilhelm Meister came out of the gardens he encountered Mignon who, recognizing her deliverer, sprang forward, knelt at his feet, and poured out grateful thanks. He had forgotten her, but touched by her devotion, began to talk with her, and so learnt her story.

As they talked Giarno came along, and seeing that Wilhelm was interested in her, made the suggestion that the young man should pay him a ransom for her, when he would set her free.

The youth agreed readily, so the gipsy went off well satisfied, and Mignon was no longer a member of the gipsy troupe.

After gratefully thanking her deliverer, Mignon turned to Lothario the Harpist, standing near by, and bade him rejoice with her. He came forward, unable to account for his extraordinary interest in her, and Wilhelm, realizing that in the wandering musician Mignon had a true friend, left them together.

Back in the gardens the young student again encountered Filena and the actor, and they joyously informed him that luck had at last come their way. Living in the neighbourhood was a very rich Baron who was entertaining a large party in his castle. He had sent word to Laertes that he and his company should come to the Castle and play for them. Filena, anxious to have Wilhelm in her wake, suggested that he should join their company and become an actor.

Wilhelm was ripe for any adventure, besides which he was falling a victim to Filena's spells. He at once agreed to her proposal, then left them to make arrangements, while he himself went back to Lothario and Mignon.

Feeling that he was in some way responsible for the girl, he told her that he would take her to some worthy

folk in the town, but Mignon passionately implored him not to send her away. Although she scarcely understood it as yet, she was in love with Wilhelm, and she suggested that attired as a page she should travel with him wherever he went and serve him. Eventually Wilhelm gave in and agreed.

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A few days later, attired as a page, and with the old harper accompanying her, Mignon set out with Wilhelm, who was going to the castle to join the strolling players. They were already installed in a suite of apartments there.

On their arrival, Wilhelm was conducted to Filena's room. She received him with great delight, scornfully ignoring the young page who was obliged to watch her lavishing her blandishments on the young man.

Poor Mignon, half child, half woman, watched sorrowfully and wondered if she could ever make herself so like Filena that Wilhelm would fall in love with her.

With that thought in her mind she watched her opportunity, and when she was alone in the apartment, took out one of Filena's wonderful dresses.

She dressed herself in it, sat before the mirror, and proceeded to make herself up.

Suddenly she heard some one approaching. Jumping up in confusion she hid herself in the adjoining room, still wearing her borrowed plumes.

The young man who entered was Frederick, the nephew of the Baron. He had fallen in love with the coquettish Filena, and expected to find her in the room. He was followed by Wilhelm, who demanded to know his business.

The love-sick youth, believing that Wilhelm was a rival, drew his sword, and Wilhelm whipped out his, too. Wilhelm had really come at the instigation of Filena, who wanted him to get rid of Mignon.

When Mignon heard the clatter of swords and the angry voice of Frederick, she forgot everything except her anxiety for the man she loved, and she rushed in to intervene.

She had to explain how she came to be there, and Wilhelm told her that they must part; she must go back to the town.

Whilst she was pleading with him to be allowed to stay, Filena came in, and mocking at the gipsy girl, told her that as she had taken a fancy to the robe she wore, she could keep it. But Mignon tore the garment to pieces in her anger, and rushed away, jealous and miserable.

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Dressed in her gipsy garb once more, Mignon made her way towards a lonely lake in the grounds, while shouts of applause within the castle told her of Filena's triumph.

Indeed, coquette that she was, Filena was a great actress, and that day she surpassed herself and bewitched every one who saw her. She had stolen Mignon's lover. She was fêted and made much of, and the more Mignon thought about it, the more hopeless her love seemed.

Before her flowed the dark waters of the lake. . . . Just as she was about to throw herself in she heard the music from a harp, and turning, saw old Lothario.

She poured out her story, and he led her away from the lake, soothing and cheering her. But as they came in sight of the castle from which again issued loud applause, Mignon bitterly expressed a wish that the castle might break into flames.

The old harper left her; but returning in a few minutes said he had set the castle on fire. Mignon paid but little heed, thinking he was talking at random, and just at that moment guests and players came trooping into the grounds.

Whilst she was occupied in talking, Wilhelm happened to see Mignon, and he hurried to her side. Greeting the girl with grave tenderness, he told her he had been searching for her. But before Mignon could say much Filena discovered where Wilhelm had gone, and she crossed over to them, bidding Mignon fetch her bouquet from the castle.

Once more despair ate into Mignon's heart, and as she hastened to do Filena's bidding, she suddenly remembered the words of the old harper, for she encountered the smell of smoke.

Her wish was now that she might perish here since Wilhelm loved Filena, but just as she disappeared within the castle, smoke and flames revealed to those outside what was happening, and, with a loud cry, Wilhelm dashed towards the building. Fighting his way through the flames he at last found Mignon, and despite her protests took her in his arms and carried her to safety.

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The excitement of the fire had restored sanity to Lothario, and when Wilhelm carried his beautiful burden forward, the old man announced in dignified language his intention of taking her to the palace of Cipriani in Italy. And Wilhelm, whose infatuation for Filena was now beginning to fade, announced his intention of accompanying them.

They arrived at the wonderful palace where, to Wilhelm's amazement, he found that the servants obeyed the commands of the old harper as though he were their master.

But they had scarcely arrived before Mignon fell dangerously ill. She babbled of the misery that had racked her heart, and again and again she uttered Wilhelm's name, so that whilst lying unconscious, she revealed her love for him.

That was how Wilhelm learnt her secret, and he was

so touched that as he gazed at her he, too, fell deeply in love. Then came a day when delirium passed, and as Mignon looked into Wilhelm's eyes, he told her of his love.

While they were planning their future, Lothario entered the room. He was clad in rich garments, and his speech was no longer that of a madman. He told them that he was the Count of Cipriani, owner of the palace in which they found themselves, and then he told them the story of the tragedy that had eaten into his life.

Many years ago he had been a happy father, adoring his little daughter Sperata, but she had been stolen from him. The shock of losing her had almost turned his brain.

For fifteen years he had wandered from one country to another in the guise of a harper, searching for his lost child, and he related that when first he encountered Mignon he was strangely drawn to her because she reminded him faintly of his dead wife.

He produced a casket just then containing a girdle which he declared had once been worn daily by his little daughter.

Bending to look into the casket, Mignon withdrew another treasure, a little prayer-book. The Count declared that out of this book Sperata had always spelt her evening prayer. . . .

Mignon groped in her brain for a clue. Like one under a spell, she closed her eyes, and the babble of a childish prayer came back to her. She repeated it aloud. It was the prayer in the book, the prayer Sperata had learnt to say.

This convinced the old man that Mignon was indeed his long-lost daughter, and he took her in his arms and kissed her fondly. Then, turning to Wilhelm, he placed Mignon's hand in the young man's and gave them both his blessing.

Iris

Pietro Mascagni (1863–) *was Italian by birth. He was originally intended for the law, and his father discouraged all his musical ambitions. Later he was adopted by an uncle who perceived his talent, and he was allowed to study music in earnest.*

Mascagni is better known probably as the composer of CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA, *the brilliant one-act opera which brought him fame almost in a night. He afterwards produced many other operatic works, of which* IRIS, *produced in* 1898, *achieved the greatest success.*

Osako began to make love to her.

Iris

OUT of a cottage built in a wonderful Japanese garden there stepped Iris, a beautiful maiden just verging upon womanhood. She had always lived in this cottage with her blind father, who depended entirely upon her for all his needs. Iris loved her garden, and when she came out of the cottage into its sweet-smelling expanse, she clasped her hands in ecstasy, for she saw new flowers blossoming.

Then as the sun rose, and its golden rays fell upon her, she reached out her arms in a kind of worshipping adoration, and sang a chant of praise, saluting it as a beloved friend.

Iris regarded the sun as a real being, and looked upon it as a princely protector and friend.

She lived so much alone with only her thoughts for company—save when old Cieco, her blind father needed her—that she had to invent playmates. She often talked to the sun as a living god, and believed that its rays brought her messages of love and joy.

As she stood in the garden two strangers happened to pass. Seeing the lovely maiden talking to the sun, they halted, being filled with admiration of her beauty, as well as with amazement at her innocence, for her talk was almost like the prattle of a child.

The strangers crept nearer. One was Osako, a wealthy young nobleman, already tired of the world's pleasures. The other was Kyoto, the owner of the richest house in the Yoshiwara—the name given to the least reputable district in a Japanese town.

Osako suddenly found a new interest in life at the sight of such beauty, and Kyoto, who knew that Osako would pay a huge sum for the gratification of any whim, told him that within a few hours he should possess this lovely maiden.

He also said that in order to hoodwink her blind father, who kept his daughter most jealously guarded, they must lay their plans well. So the two conspirators went off, leaving Iris alone in the garden of flowers.

Just then her father called to her, and like a dutiful daughter, she hurried to him, leading him by the hand into the sunshine. Then having found him a sunny corner she fetched his rosary and left him to his prayers, whilst she tended her flowers.

It was very quiet in the garden, but as the blind man finished his prayers, the peace was broken by the voices of girls, who came to wash their dainty garments in the clear stream that flowed close by.

As they chattered and sang, and washed and folded their clothes, there came the sound of music, music that was followed by the arrival of a troupe of travelling players with a kind of puppet show.

They set up their miniature stage near the cottage and the girls ran to see what it was these men had to show them. Iris, fascinated by the music, wandered from her garden, too, although her father called her to stay beside him.

She called back, reassuring him, and unaware of any danger, went through the hedge so as to get a good view of the performing puppets. She had never seen anything of the kind before, and was so thrilled that she believed the characters to be real.

Osako and Kyoto had arranged this play, and Osako, who had a wonderful voice, now began to sing of the sun-god who bore the dying heroine to his own golden abode.

Osako watched eagerly, and he now made a sign to the geishas he had hired, who commenced to dance madly about her.

Iris woke as from a dream to find herself the centre of a whirling group, but before she could utter a protest a thick cloak was thrown over her, and she was carried away.

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Bearing a bag of gold coins, Kyoto went quietly to the cottage, stepping so softly that he was unheard by the blind man. Upon the doorstep he placed the money, together with a note purporting to come from Iris, in which she said that she had gone with a wealthy admirer to live in the city.

The old man called for Iris, and getting no answer became terrified. Then hearing the music die away in the distance he stumbled towards the cottage, calling out pitifully for her.

Some of the onlookers at the puppet show, who had stopped behind, hastened to help the blind man. They discovered the gold and the note, and read this to him.

Cieco became furious on hearing that his daughter had gone away, and he called out curses upon her, declaring that he would follow her, if only to fling stones at her.

Full of sympathy for him, the onlookers took him by the hand to guide his tottering steps to the city.

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Kyoto had a wonderfully furnished house in the Yoshiwara quarter, so that when Iris woke to consciousness some hours later, she found herself in a marvellous room.

Accustomed all her life to the simplicity of a cottage, she was amazed and almost frightened at this magnificence.

Meanwhile, all unknown to Iris, Osako watched her.

He marvelled at her loveliness, and declared to Kyoto that he felt afraid to woo her.

Kyoto, man of the world that he was, and eager to make money, assured him that all women were alike, that it would be easy to win her with rich gifts.

So Osako entered the room and began to make passionate love to her.

Iris recognized his voice as the sun-god's, which had so thrilled her at the puppet show. She believed that it must really be her noble prince and friend, the sun, to whom she had so often addressed her morning song of love and praise.

Then as he grew more ardent in his wooing, she shrank back in terror and bewilderment, and became aware in some dim fashion that danger threatened her.

Falling on her knees, she begged him to let her return to her simple life in the cottage, and begged too that he would let her go quickly, since her father would miss her so.

And Osako called Kyoto to him and bade him take her back home.

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Now the mercenary Kyoto was determined to profit by Iris's loveliness. He therefore called to the geishas, and had her dressed in beautiful attire much against her will.

She was terrified and tried to tear off the richly-embroidered kimono, but Kyoto seized her roughly and taking her to a window, showed her that on one side of the house was a steep precipice, down which he threatened to throw her if she did not obey.

In the end, Iris allowed herself to be dressed in the rich clothes, and she obeyed Kyoto when he told her to sit by the window.

Soon the outside of the house was crowded with admirers, struck by her beauty. Among them was

Osako, who, hearing the plaudits of the rest, came to look upon the new wonder.

On seeing the lovely girl whom he had discarded, Osako realized that she would fall a victim to one of these men standing around, so he began again to make love to her.

Whilst he was addressing her, a great commotion arose at the other end of the street. It was the blind man coming in search of his daughter, attended by a company of idle folk.

Directly Iris saw her father she called out joyously to him; but tricked and deceived by the note which had been read to him, the old man bitterly reproached her, and stooping in his rage, caught up stones and dust and threw them at her.

Poor Iris was so bewildered by this sudden change in a hitherto adoring parent that she did not know what to do. Words left her, and as her father's imprecations became worse, the terribleness of it all seemed to drive her mad.

She sprang back into the room and across to the open window on the other side. Then she flung herself down the rocky precipice.

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All through the night Iris lay on the ground far below, still breathing, but unconscious.

As dawn broke over the city, the sun rose.

A golden gleam touched the girl; another touched her. And Iris opened her eyes.

She saw her lover, the sun, and at the same time sweet and fragrant flowers sprang up all around.

The rocks vanished, and Iris was in her garden. . . .

But the body of the beautiful girl lay still. Her soul had sped on the beams of golden light to the Land of Eternal Happiness.

The Boatswain's Mate

Dr. Ethel Mary Smyth, D.B.E., is one of the most eminent of present-day composers. She has the distinction to be the first Englishwoman to write a grand opera, and in addition to opera she has written many symphonies and a considerable amount of chamber music.

This opera was first produced in London in 1917, *the libretto being adapted from a short story of the same title by the well-known writer, W. W. Jacobs.*

The widow came downstairs carrying a gun.

The Boatswain's Mate

OUTSIDE the Beehive Inn one evening sat Harry Benn, thoughtfully sipping at a mug of beer.

The Beehive was a delightful little inn, a first-rate business, and it was kept by a widow named Mrs. Waters. Mr. Harry Benn was a middle-aged bachelor—an ex-boatswain—and for a long time past it had been in his mind that it would be an admirable proposition to join forces with the fair widow, and so become landlord of the Beehive. Hitherto, however, every proposal of his had been refused by Mrs. Waters. He sighed and looked despondent.

Mary Ann, the maid-of-all-work, seated outside the inn, glanced at the disconsolate suitor, and he looked at her. She was waiting for her mistress to pay her her wages, as she was going home for the night.

But, although Mr. Harry Benn sought to enlist her sympathy, he had little help from the girl, for she always said very scathing things about husbands and their uselessness.

Knitting in hand, jolly Mrs. Waters came to the door. She paid Mary Ann and bade her return in good time next day. When the girl had gone, the boatswain seized his opportunity, and suggested that with Mary Ann away Mrs. Waters must feel lonely at night. Was she not afraid of burglars? Did she not long for the protection of a man?

Still knitting, the widow told him she was not nervous; then remembering that she wanted to go to the village on business, suggested that while she was away

he might take charge of the Beehive and serve any customers who might call.

Benn agreed, so she set off, leaving the boatswain a little happier with his responsibility.

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Up and down he strutted, singing sea songs, assuring himself from time to time that he would not accept her "no" as an answer.

Then through the gate there came a good-looking stranger, an ex-soldier on the tramp, and believing Benn to be the landlord, he called for a drink, putting down fourpence—all the money he possessed in the world.

Pleased with his importance, Benn brought out two mugs of beer and began to chat with the tramp. Presently he took him into his confidence.

Fetching two more mugs of beer, he told Travers—that being the ex-soldier's name—that although he was not the landlord yet, he hoped to be very soon, and he suggested how Travers might help him.

The plan was for Travers to pretend to be a burglar and to break into the inn, making noise enough to awaken Mrs. Waters, who, thinking herself at the man's mercy, would naturally scream for help.

Benn proposed that he should be hiding outside. When he heard her scream, he would rush in and knock down and capture the burglar. This procedure, he assured himself and his new-found friend, would convince Mrs. Waters that a husband would be really useful to her.

He offered Travers ten shillings to do this, but Travers either did not think it enough, or did not like the idea of being knocked down and accused of breaking into the place. He pointed out also that he stood the risk of being knocked about by neighbours who might also rush to the rescue of the widow.

Benn assured him, however, that there were no

neighbours within hail, and gradually increased the price until it stood at "three quid."

At last Travers agreed, but he insisted upon having the whole affair set down in writing, which would explain that there was no attempt at burglary at all, but that it was a plot on the part of Mr. Harry Benn.

This being settled and signed, he made off, and soon afterwards Mrs. Waters returned.

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Not to be beaten, Benn again told the widow of his anxiety over her loneliness, but the widow took no notice—just went on with the work of clearing tables.

At last Benn had to go, and not long afterwards the widow locked up for the night.

Benn met Travers, and together they had a good meal. Then, soon after two o'clock in the morning they walked to the Beehive.

Going round to a side window that opened on to the kitchen, Travers threw up the window, starting back fearfully, however, as the widow's cat and a companion set up a fearful din. But plucking up courage he crawled through, and Benn took up his position outside.

Stumbling about in the dark kitchen, Travers managed to make a good deal of noise.

Presently, a light shining from the widow's bedroom assured Benn that the noise had awakened the owner. In fact he saw her descending the stairs.

But Travers, inside, was amazed and very much disconcerted to see that the landlady was carrying a double-barrelled gun. Hurriedly getting into the kitchen cupboard, he closed the door on himself.

The widow was not the least bit afraid. She pressed the gun against the cupboard door, declaring that if he dared to come out she would shoot.

Travers was terrified, and when she announced her intention of arousing the neighbours by firing her gun out of the kitchen window, he became so frightened

that he revealed the whole plot, even slipping the written statement beneath the cupboard door. This, of course, gave the game away, and the widow, satisfied, allowed him to come out.

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Now Travers was a good-looking man, and he had very agreeable manners, so that it was not long before the two were mutually interested in each other.

The widow, however, was determined to turn the tables on Benn. She told Travers to hide upstairs whilst she let off the gun to arouse the neighbours.

As he disappeared she fired, but into a doormat, so that the sound did not travel far, then immediately afterwards rushed to the door and shouted for help.

Benn ran in, and she clutched his arm, telling him in agitated tones that she had heard a noise and, suspecting burglars, had fired at the man she saw hiding behind the cupboard door, with the result that she had shot him dead.

He suggested then that perhaps the burglar was not quite dead, but she would have none of this. Handing him a spade she told him to go to the potato plot and dig a grave.

Poor Harry Benn! Flurried and flustered, he tried to get out of it, but she would take no refusal. So staring ruefully at the spade the ex-boatswain went out into the night, thinking sadly of the plight into which the adventure had led him.

When he had gone Travers returned to the room, and he and the landlady laughed merrily together.

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Daylight came soon afterwards, and as Mrs. Waters was about to send Travers away, she was amazed to see Benn come up the garden path accompanied by a policeman.

Instead of digging a grave in the potato patch, he had gone off, confessed that through him murder had

been done at the Beehive, and had brought the representative of the law in order to ease his conscience.

Mrs. Waters did not lose her head. She hustled Travers into the scullery and indignantly protested to the policeman when he entered.

To his demands she declared that no corpse was in the house, adding that there had been neither murder nor burglary, but that the whole thing was a cock-and-bull story invented by Harry Benn, the boatswain, while under the influence of drink.

Benn opened his mouth in amazement, and just then a crash of crockery was heard. Opening the scullery door, Mrs. Waters reproved the man within, who, she said, was a plumber doing some repairing.

Benn followed to look, and he got the shock of his life when he saw Travers, whom he believed to be dead. He was so relieved, however, that he turned to the policeman and assured him that the widow was right—he had had too much to drink. And finally he and the policeman left the house.

Travers then came out, praising Mrs. Waters' common-sense and ready wit, at the same time openly expressing admiration for her charms.

At first she was rather tart with him. But finally his good looks and pleasantry won the day, and she invited him to stay and have breakfast.

It was a merry meal that followed, and for the first time for many years, perhaps, the widow realized how much more comfortable everything seemed with a man about the place.

Travers, too, looking around, saw what a snug little place it was, and how happy the landlord of the Beehive might be. No wonder Mr. Harry Benn had coveted that position! So he at last confessed that he would indeed esteem himself a happy man if he were landlord there, husband too, of such a charming widow.

But even then she would not say one way or the other, although her smile gave him hope. She arranged to meet him in the woods that evening to talk matters over; and pleased and proud, he set off from the inn, very well content, for he knew he would win her. . . .

A little while later, Mary Ann, the maid-of-all-work, came in. As she entered the door of the Beehive, she was stunned to see her mistress dancing gaily about the kitchen, holding a mirror in her hand into which she peeped and smiled.

Mrs. Waters had made up her mind. A man about the house would indeed be better for her. But it would not be the boatswain. It would be his mate!

The Perfect Fool

Gustav Holst was born at Cheltenham in 1874. *This fantastic opera represents the modern school of composition, being first produced in London so recently as* 1923. *The music runs on original lines, and the opera received a certain amount of criticism on that account. On the whole, however, it was highly praised by the music-loving public, and any new composition by Gustav Holst is now received with eager interest.*

As though in a trance the Princess walked towards the heedless Fool.

The Perfect Fool

ONCE upon a time there lived a beautiful Princess who could not make up her mind which of her many suitors she should marry. So she issued a proclamation that she would choose the most wonderful man in the world, and the one who was able to do what no other man on earth could do.

Amongst those who would have liked to wed her was an old wizard. But not only was he old, he was ugly and unattractive too.

Yet he was skilled in the Black Art. He knew all the secrets of witchcraft and magic. He could summon up mighty spirits to help him, and he was well acquainted with the secrets that go to the making of love potions and magic brews. So into his mind there sprang the determination to win yet more power, since by marrying the Princess he would be ruler of the land.

At the hour of midnight the wizard went to some cross-roads, where there was a cromlech—a kind of stone table—and here he invoked familiar spirits to help him in his task, for he wished to brew a love potion so that the Princess would forget his age and ugliness, and fall in love with him. He built up a magic fire and then proceeded to call the spirits to his aid.

First he summoned the Spirits of Earth, and crowds of brown gnomes and pixie-faced goblins came scrambling out at his command.

"Fetch me the magic cup that is concealed in the deepest cavern in the middle of the earth," he commanded loftily.

The gnomes obeyed, and the wizard then waved his hands, bidding them begone.

Next he summoned the Spirits of Water, and to them he handed the wonderful cup.

"Fill this for me with the essence of passionate love," he told them.

The Water Sprites returned with the goblet full of a crystal essence.

When the Water Sprites had gone, the wizard turned to the glowing embers of the fire, and with curious gestures and strange words conjured out of the heart of the flame the Spirits of Fire. He bade them disguise themselves in the magic essence of Love, so that the brew should set the heart of the Princess on fire with love for him.

The Spirits of Fire disappeared, dissolving themselves in the essence, and breathing a sigh of relief the old wizard went on with his mystic rites, working all through the hours of darkness. Then as dawn came he wrapped himself in his cloak, and lay down to rest from his labours.

* * * * *

Down the mountain path, as the sun rose over the hilltops, there came a poor beggar-woman, leading by the hand her only son—a half-witted, lazy youth. Fool or idiot that he was, and a great trouble to the poor woman, she took him with her wherever she went. But in her heart there dwelt the secret belief that one day the poor Fool would awake from his stupor and become as other men.

It was not only mother-love that made her cling to this belief. When her son was born the Wise Men had come to inspect him, for even in infancy he had looked foolish and vacant. The Wise Men had made a strange prophecy, and the words rang for ever in the mother's ears.

"He will win a bride with one glance of his eye, kill

a foe with one look. He will achieve where all others fail, and will do this with one word," they had told her.

As the two neared the cromlech her footsteps faltered and she hesitated a moment. The Fool was quick to seize the opportunity. He dropped on to the ground and fell asleep.

The mother sighed, looked at him wistfully, and again repeated aloud the prophecy of the Wise Men. But there was doubt in her heart. How could this loutish fellow win a bride? How could he hope to kill a foe with one look, and with a single word achieve where all others had failed?

The mother's doubts changed into anger, and she would have left him where he lay. But as she turned to go she caught sight of the old wizard lying there asleep, and at sight of his rich clothes—for the wizard had arrayed himself in handsome garments—she thought he must be a Prince. She determined to ask him to help and protect her foolish son.

Tremblingly she awakened him. The wizard was at first furious at being disturbed, but when he saw she was only a harmless beggar-woman, he made up his mind to use her as an audience before whom he could rehearse his speech, composed specially in honour of the Princess.

He dropped his malevolent expression, and began to boast of what he was going to do. He showed the beggar-woman the magic cup containing the love potion, and declared that as the Princess had promised to wed the man who could do the deed no other man could do, he would be the chosen one, since he alone out of all the world could make her fall in love with him.

Suddenly the poor mother was seized with an idea, remembering the prophecy of the Wise Men.

The wizard recited his speech, and being satisfied

that it was a brilliant piece of work, eventually lay down again and went off to sleep.

Just then three peasant girls came tripping down the side of the mountain, carrying utensils to be filled with water. There was a spring near by, and as they passed the beggar-woman, they were singing of the beauty of clear water. This helped the poor mother with the idea that had formed in her mind.

Stealing to the side of the wizard, who was fast asleep, she took up the magic goblet, carried it to the Fool and shook him.

He woke protesting, and yawned, but heedless of his spluttering, the mother poured the colourless magic potion into his mouth. As the peasant maidens returned she begged them to give her some water. Willingly they filled her goblet, and the mother replaced it beside the sleeping wizard.

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With trumpets heralding her, and with a large retinue of attendants, the beautiful Princess came near to the cromlech, and again announced her determination to marry the man who should prove himself the greatest on earth, and who could do that which no other man could do.

The old wizard, now wide awake, stepped forward, declaring himself the most wonderful man in all the world.

For a moment the Princess was too much astonished by his age and ugliness to make any suitable retort. When at last she did find words, she told him calmly that he was far too old for her.

"Wait, my Princess," he cried. "In a moment you shall change your mind. The very ecstasy of love shall tingle your blood, and you shall find me young and handsome."

The wizard drank off the contents of the magic goblet, and with a smile turned to regard the Princess,

who only looked bored and a little angry at what she considered was his fooling.

"Am I not young and handsome enough now?" he cried. "Do you not love me, my Princess?"

He held open his arms and would have advanced towards her. But indignantly the Princess drew back and gave a command to her courtiers, who hurriedly drew their swords, and drove him away up the mountain-side. As he fled he vowed vengeance upon them all.

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Two other men then endeavoured to win the Princess, but each failed to fulfil the conditions.

The second man became very excited over his failure, and as he moved about he stumbled over the sleeping Fool, who sat up and stared about him. The very first person he saw was the Princess, and his mother watched eagerly.

The magic brew began to work, and the Princess gazed at the Fool as one spellbound. Then slowly, as though in a trance, she walked towards him, knelt beside him, and flattered and caressed him.

The Fool yawned noisily, and heedless of his mother's protestations and the caresses of the Princess, fell asleep once more.

The onlookers stared in amazement. Their Princess was infatuated with a ragged lout!

Angrily the mother would have shaken her son, fearing that her plan was beginning to fail, but with a beautiful smile the Princess bade her stay her hand, and again continued to murmur happy nothings and pet words in the ears of the sleeping youth. Onlookers declared the Princess was bewitched, the other disappointed suitors returned and began to quarrel with each other, and whilst the Princess petted her sleeping Fool, the mother wrung her hands, and every one was in confusion.

Whilst this was taking place the sky had grown dark. There came now the rumbling of far-off thunder, and all at once a frightened shepherd lad appeared who declared that the whole countryside was being devastated by fire of a most mysterious character, demons and evil spirits leaping and dancing amid the flames.

The thunder drew nearer, and the courtiers and peasants crowded around the Princess to protect her, begging her to seek safety, since the powers of the Evil One had apparently been unloosed.

The infatuated Princess laughed at them, and turned again to the sleeping Fool. Her indifference to danger so angered the people, however, that they declared the lout had bewitched her. So in spite of her protests they tried to drag the Fool out of reach of the Princess's gaze.

"Go! Go!" shrieked the mother to the courtiers and the others. "You may fly if you want to, but he must stay to face the danger, whatever it may be. He has won his bride with a glance. He must now stay to kill his foe with one look."

They thought her mad, and finding that the Princess would not leave her lover, rushed away to get soldiers to help them. As they turned to go, refugees and frightened peasants from the devastated districts began to pour hurriedly into their midst.

The cairn at the cross-roads was a gathering place for all kinds of people.

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Dark was the sky, fierce was the thunder. Lightning flashed. And suddenly, surrounded by the Spirits of Fire, the wicked wizard returned, breathing yet more vengeance. His magical powers had returned. He was able to summon all the powers of Evil to his aid.

Seeing him and his flaming genii, the frightened peasants fled shrieking, leaving only the Princess, the Fool, and his mother.

The critical moment had arrived. Shaking her son furiously, the beggar-woman forced him to sit up, and she held his head in such a way that the first person he looked upon was the wizard.

The words of the Wise Men were like a chant in her brain.

"Kill a foe with one look."

The Fool was sleepy and bored, but the prophecy proved true. The wizard halted and paled, then suddenly fell to the ground.

There was a loud crash of thunder, a huge flame, and the three hid their faces. When they dared to look the wizard and the Spirits of Fire had vanished. The thunder ceased, and the sun came back once more.

Finding there was no longer any danger, the rustics and courtiers returned, but the Princess was furious. In scornful tones she told them that in the moment of danger they had left her, the only person remaining to guard her being the poor Fool.

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"He shall be my husband!" she cried. "He is the greatest man on earth."

Then turning to the Fool she implored him passionately to tell her that he loved her. But he only grinned stupidly, shook his head and answered "No!"

At this the courtiers and peasants, infuriated by his indifference and what they considered dreadful rudeness, would have intervened and beaten him soundly, but the beggar-woman stepped forward.

"You shall not belabour my son, even though he be a Fool," she cried. "He has done what no other man could do!"

Then she turned to the adoring Princess who was still worshipping the Fool.

"He is the only man who has looked into your face and not loved you," she told her.

The Princess smiled happily, regardless of the surprised looks on all sides.

She had secured a husband who fulfilled the conditions she herself had laid down, for it was she who had declared that the successful suitor must do what no other man could do.

So the old prophecy had come true, and as the people began to understand this, hope grew in their hearts again. Even a Fool may be a Wise Man at times, and they began to dance and sing and to make preparations for the crowning of the beggar who was to marry their beautiful Princess and step to a throne.

The High Priest arrived with the kingly crown. They woke him. But he remained the Perfect Fool, for before the jewelled circlet could reach his forehead he was once more asleep.